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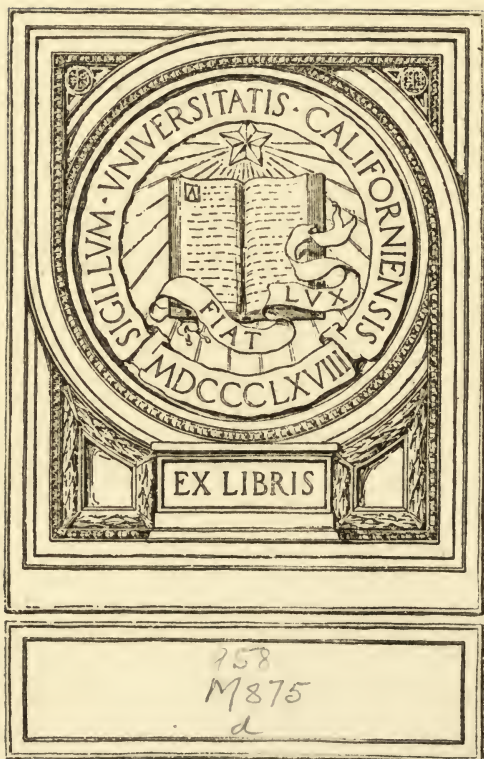


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# Days Out and Other Papers

By Elisabeth  
Woodbridge



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By Elisabeth Woodbridge

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DAYS OUT AND OTHER PAPERS.

MORE JONATHAN PAPERS.

THE JONATHAN PAPERS.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK



## **Days Out and Other Papers**



# Days Out and Other Papers

By

Mrs. Elisabeth Woodbridge Morris



THE HUGHTON  
MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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## Contents

DAYS OUT . . . . .	3
AN UNLOVELY VIRTUE . . . . .	12
A BRIEF FOR THE HAT . . . . .	19
THE CAT AND THE BELL-COLLAR . . . . .	24
CLUBS AMONG THE CUBS . . . . .	31
THE CULT OF THE SECOND-BEST . . . . .	37
AN APPENDIX TO BACON . . . . .	49
✓ THE EMBARRASSMENT OF FINALITY . . . . .	53
✓ THE WINE OF ANONYMITY. . . . .	61
✓ THE HOUSE AND THE HILL . . . . .	69
HUMOR AND THE HEROINE . . . . .	77
✓ THE HUMOR-FETISH . . . . .	85
IN THE MATTER OF "FAITH". . . . .	93
"IN THEIR SEASON" . . . . .	103
MANNERS AND THE PURITAN . . . . .	111
A MATTER OF PLANES . . . . .	123
A MEDITATION CONCERNING FORMS . . . . .	129
THE TYRANNY OF THINGS . . . . .	135
THE TYRANNY OF FACTS . . . . .	141
TRAVELERS' LETTERS . . . . .	148
THE NOVELIST'S CHOICE . . . . .	155
THE LITERARY USES OF EXPERIENCE . . . . .	191



## Days Out and Other Papers





## Days Out

I HAD followed up her advertisement, and she stood before me in the dim hallway to which she had given me entrance. As she fingered the front door knob she told me her qualities. "Yes, mum," she concluded, "I does my work, mum. I don't never have company, and I don't never want days out."

I protested, "I always give my cook one day a week, afternoon and evening."

"Yes, mum, I know. But when I gets my work done, I likes to set right down in the kitchen. I don't want to go nowhere. If there's somethin' I need, — a spool o' cotton, or some stockin's, — why, I most gen'ally tells the lady, two-three days ahead, and then I runs out of a Saturday evenin', mebbe, fer an hour or two."

"And Sundays?" I asked faintly, — "I let my cook and waitress both go out on Sunday afternoon."

"No, I don't never go out on Sundays at all. Ye see, I likes to do my work, and when

I gets through I likes to rest. That's the kind I am."

I sighed. Undoubtedly hers was a good kind, but undoubtedly I didn't want her. I had had one experience of that kind. She stayed with me two years, and in all that time was never away over a meal-hour. She was as good a creature as ever lived, but when she left, I said to myself, "Henceforth I shall *insist* on days out."

The fact is, I have an unconquerable love for my own kitchen and pantries. When I was a child they were to me realms of bliss, where I was often tolerated, often even welcomed. They still seem this to me, and — not to be tolerated at all — it is too much!

Perhaps that is an exaggeration. My cooks have usually tolerated me. They have even been polite to me. When I slink half-apologetically into the kitchen, to have a finger, so to speak, in the pie, they bring me dishes, and materials, and clear tables for me, and try to make believe I am not in the way — at least the nice ones do. But they watch me furtively. If they are self-righteous, their attitude is slightly critical, if they are self-

distrustful, it is apprehensive: — what am I going to find out about their pantry? And as I am idiotically sensitive to my cook's attitude, I am conscious of this, and it spoils the fun. I slip out of my kitchen — their kitchen — and hie me to other parts of the house, that seem more truly mine.

But, on the days out, — ah, those delicious days out! For the cook's outings are my innings. She is happy, too. How she works! The luncheon dishes are whisked out of the way, the kitchen is "redd up," and she flies to her room to dress. I slip out, glance up the back stairs, go to the range and poke the fire, change the draughts, shift the kettle a little, then hastily retreat to the parlor, and play the piano, with the soft pedal down, until I hear the back door shut. Then! No more piano for me! I can play the piano any time.

I walk swiftly and boldly out into the kitchen — my kitchen — MY kitchen. I perch on a table and swing my feet, in a glory of possession. What shall I make? I go over to the range again. Good fire, — good oven. I can make anything, anything! A feeling of

power comes over me. I go to the pantry and scan its contents. I am always careful to have it well stocked on these days, that my creative impulses, no matter how freakish, may suffer no thwarting by reason of a lack of materials. I pick up the cook-book and resume my perch. I am in no special hurry. It is not yet four, and one can do almost anything between four and half-past six.

The telephone rings. I go, with my thumb in the cooky recipes. I lay the book open on the table beside me, and my eye runs over the page as I take down the receiver.

"Yes? Yes, this is Mrs. ——— Oh, Mrs. Grundy, good afternoon. — What? Another bridge? Are n't you a gay lady! — Oh, I'm so sorry. I don't play well, of course you know, but I suppose I *would* come to fill up, only you see I can't. It's my cook's day out. (I'm so glad I ordered molasses this morning!) — No, I can't change, she's gone already. (Would sugar-cookies be better, I wonder.) — Yes, of course, it *is* inconvenient sometimes, but they do want their days out, don't they? — Thank you, I'm sorry too. I hope you'll find somebody, I'm sure you will.

— Yes, good-bye.” I hang up the receiver with a sigh of relief. — Yes, I think, — ginger cookies. Hester and Tom will be in soon, — and they’re so good when they’re just out of the oven.

I go back, get into my big apron, give another look to my fire and my oven, and plunge in. There arises a delicious odor of spices and molasses and butter — an aroma of cooking, in short.

The front door opens and shuts, there is a stampede of feet up and downstairs. Then the kitchen door bursts open. “Oh, good! It’s Sarah’s day out! Hester! Come on. It’s Sarah’s day out!”

Hester arrives. “May we make the toast?” “May I set the table?” “What do I smell?” “May I stir?” “May we scrape the bowl?” “May we make griddle-cakes?”

It is like a frog-chorus in spring.

Perhaps I try to be severe.

“Griddle-cakes? Nonsense! Who ever heard of griddle-cakes at night? Ginger cookies are queer enough. Besides, they don’t go well together.”

“No matter! Who cares! We always do



nice, queer things when Sarah is out. And we can eat up all the cookies as soon as they're done, and then they won't interfere with the cakes."

It makes really very little difference how it turns out, what things finally get cooked. The important thing is, that the cooking goes merrily on, and joy reigns.

It is, I maintain, a joy to rejoice in. I am heartily sorry for people who never do their own cooking. Cooking is an art, not only creative but social. It takes the raw materials and converts them into a product that is every way pleasing, and that brings the people who enjoy it into social harmony. The immediate products do not abide: the better they are, the more quickly they vanish; but they leave behind something spiritual and permanent. A busy mother, who was a wonderful cook, once said to me, "Sometimes it hardly seems worth while to cook things when they go so fast; but then, I think, after all, they leave behind them a memory of a jolly home-table that does last, so perhaps it pays."

I am sure she was right. The memory of

that home-table has lasted forty years and more, and does not yet seem to be fading.

There are other things to remember about that home, there are other things that are worth while in any home, but I think that in our modern conditions we lose too much of the pleasure that comes through doing practical things together. Almost all the physical work of our daily lives is delegated. Life is being systematized on that basis, and though there are great gains, there are also losses. The change is deeply affecting the character and quality of our hospitality. This is a big subject, and I am not going to be drawn into it too deeply. All I want to say is, that I believe we are letting ourselves be so involved in the machinery of our hospitality that we are cheated of some of its pleasures. We have submitted to certain conventions of "entertaining," and if we cannot satisfy these, we do not "entertain." What a pity! And yet, while I say this, I am aware that I too am enslaved. There are many people whom I have not the courage to invite to my house — *except* on my cook's day out. Then I am emancipated. There is no one whom I dare

not invite, if I want her, when I am my own cook. Mrs. Grundy herself may come and welcome. And I believe Mrs. Grundy would have a good time. She might not ask to scrape the bowl, but I fancy she would be delighted to turn the griddle-cakes, or run out for the hot toast.

It is irresistible, this charm of doing things one's self, of doing things together. People have talked about the simple life until we are sick of the name. But we are not sick of the thing, the real thing. And our present conditions are not satisfying us. They need to be shaken up and recombined. We cannot go backward, but we can, perhaps, while accepting what is good in the new order, try to hold fast to what was good in the old. Probably it is best for me not to do all my own housework, but it would, I am convinced, be little short of a calamity if I never did any. To feel that my cook is doing her work contentedly, that she needs her wages and I need my time — this is all very well. But, like Antæus, I must touch earth often. I yearn for the poker, I hanker for the mixing-bowl, I sigh for the frying-pan. Man does not live



by bread alone, but neither does he live by taking thought alone. I love to think, and talk, and feel, but I cannot forget that I have hands which clamor to be put to use, arms which will not hang idle. It does not satisfy me to do make-believe work that does not need to be done: picture-puzzles and burnt-wood and neckties. I want real work, primitive work. Hurrah for the coal-hod! Hurrah for the tea-kettle! Hurrah for the Day Out!

## An Unlovely Virtue

WHEN I was a child, I was often not a little hampered by the fact that I could not, with any comfort, utter an untruth. Not that I had any inherent aptitude for truthfulness, — on the contrary, I was a lover of devious ways, and my nature was framed for deceit, — but early training had imposed upon me an ineradicable habit of truth-telling. It had so wrought that for me the lie was shorn of every pleasurable association, and invested with painful suggestion. My only compensation lay in a dim feeling of superior righteousness, but this was not very sincere, not very constant, and, indeed, not wholly gratifying. Gladly would I have relinquished it for the ability to tell a good, comfortable lie — not a bad, malicious, devouring-lion of a lie, but a little harmless, 'playful-kitten of a lie. Now and then, indeed, I did lay hands upon the forbidden weapon, but being unfamiliar with it, I used it clumsily — lied at the wrong time, or in the wrong way, or when there

was no need of lying, and I never got any fun out of the lie, and seldom any advantage.

Now that I am quite grown up, my plight is worse, for even the sense of superior righteousness has left me. I have been forced to recognize that the most charming, the most really admirable, of my friends are in general people who can, for the sake of harmony, of good fellowship, of friendship, utter the thing which is not. This, without disturbing my habits of truth-telling, has seriously shaken up my theories.

For one thing, I have come to realize that one must often tell a lie in order to convey a true impression, since the matter of a lie, as of a jest, —

“lies in the ear

Of him who hears it, never in the mouth

Of him who speaks it.”

For example, a certain youth was escorting to his steamer a venerable Englishman whose name stands high among the dignitaries of the Church. Their train was late, and outside the Grand Central, as ill luck would have it, but a single cab was visible. There was need of haste, yet the great man had not been

accustomed to hasten, and it looked as though the cab would be preëmpted by some of the ardent but unimportant New Yorkers who were scurrying toward it. The young man singled out an official and said impressively, "This is an English duke. He is late for his steamer. Get him that cab." The cab was theirs.

Now, according to the precepts in which I had been reared, that young man had by his act seriously jeopardized his spiritual future. Yet, might it not be maintained that he had lied in the interests of truth? He said "duke," which was not the fact; the official received the notion "great man," which was the fact. Whereas if he had said, "Here is an English canon, get him a cab," it is safe to say that the mind of the worthy official would have been filled with confusion, if not with distinctly bellicose images totally foreign to the occasion.

But there is another sort of lie whose justification cannot be framed after this fashion. There is the lie, not in the cause of truth, but in the cause of friendliness or of comfort. A friend has just given a dinner. "Did you

notice that the fish was burned?" she asks. You had noticed, every one had noticed. You answer, "My dear, I cannot deceive you, it *was* burned." You save your soul, but you make your friend miserable. Suppose instead that you say cheerfully, "No, indeed, it was perfectly delicious"; she will take heart, and think, "Well, it was only my nervousness." You will have increased the sum of happiness in the world — but how about your soul?

Suppose, again, that your best friend is engaged to be married, but there are reasons why she cannot announce the fact. Society suspects, society insinuates, finally, society asks point-blank, "*Celia, is Rosalind engaged to Orlando?*" Three courses are open: you may keep silent, but that is equivalent to saying "yes"; or you may give an evasive answer, like the servant who, when asked if her mistress was at home, replied, "Was your grandmother a monkey?" The objections to this policy are obvious. Or you may take your conscience by the throat, look society firmly in the eye, and say, "Rosalind engaged? No, indeed! What in the world could have made you think such a thing? She does n't care for



Orlando, and anyway he is really in love with Audrey, you know, and only flirting to make her jealous." Your conscience may bear for days the marks of fingers on its throat, while at the same time you will keep saying to yourself, in the manner of Henry James's devious-minded people, — "But I could n't, could I, not have done it. No, I could n't not have done it."

Is there, perhaps, something wrong with a training that leaves one no comfortable escape from so common a predicament? I myself am quite incapable of judging, being hopelessly bigoted in favor of truth-telling. A lie still seems, in spite of all arguments, a bad thing. But I am driven to wonder whether this is not the result of that rigidity of temper and of habit which was at once the strength and the weakness of our Puritan forbears. My grandfather, a man of sternest Puritan traditions, came near losing his life through that same characteristic. He was going toward the garden, when a venomous-minded cow spied him and marked him for her prey. She came on, head down, sharp horns a-prick for his gore. A little grandson, taking in the

situation, shouted from the rear, "Cheese it, grandpa! Cheese it!" The old gentleman heard, he apprehended danger, but he hated slang, and this particular phrase had been an object of special abhorrence. He turned, grim and contemptuous, and used up his moment of escape in the withering reply, "Cheese *what?*" The cow arrived, and only the huge basket that the old gentleman carried saved him from being impaled, principles and all. The long horns were buried in the basket, and its bearer was hurled backward through the garden gate. And to the youngster's puzzled query, "Why did n't you run, when you heard me tell you?" there seemed no adequate reply.

If Mr. Brooke, of "Middlemarch," had witnessed this scene, I believe his comment would have been, "Ah, sir, principles are good things in their place, but don't let them carry you too far — not too far, you know."

And it is just possible that this matter of truth-telling cannot be settled by any rigid rulings whatever. Other virtues may be carried to excess, why not truthfulness? It is one of my regrets that I was not clever enough

long ago to notice that lying, as such, is not forbidden in the Decalogue. We are, it is true, commanded not to "bear false witness," but only false witness *against* our neighbor. About false witness in his *behalf* nothing whatever is said: — that is, malicious lying is forbidden, benevolent lying is left to our discretion. I should be quite willing, if my training would allow me, to stand with Moses in this whole matter.



## A Brief for the Hat

I ENTERED the crowded railway car and walked slowly up the aisle, examining people's backs to see which looked most inviting as a seat-mate. Ah! Slim, pretty shoulders, and a head beautifully poised! I paused: "Is this seat taken?"

"No, indeed," a sweet voice answered. "Oh! How do you do? Is n't this pleasant?"

Pleasant, indeed. I sat down happily, and as I turned to look in my friend's face I had an added thrill of pleasure. There was something a-little-more-than-usual about it. I considered — yes! the hat! It had a little pinch in the brim, just in front, making a sort of gable-end, below which the face looked out at me with added piquancy. Silly idea — that pinch! Yet I was grateful to it for something it did to the always lovely face beneath it.

The incident set me thinking. I have always been one to scoff at the vagaries of fashion. They have all seemed about equally absurd to me. But now I am growing more

tolerant, especially in regard to hats. I am, in fact, evolving a philosophy of hats.

It is based on a fundamental and familiar trait of human nature. What we see constantly we cease to see vividly. The faces we notice least are those we know — and perhaps really love — best; our eyes are a bit jaded by following the familiar lines. The same is true of pure color. Water and sky are beautiful, and you may suppose that you are duly appreciative of them; but lie on the deck of a cat-boat and look at them with your head in an unaccustomed position — sideways or upside down — and note how the colors flare out upon your vision. Or stay indoors for a few weeks, in a room where you do not get much outlook, and then go out. You will be blinded by the glory of the world. But not for long. The glory, alas, fades quickly, and habit settles upon you once more.

With our friends' faces somewhat the same thing happens. When we first meet them they pique us pleasantly with their unfamiliar line and color. Gradually we grow wonted to them. The first vision has passed. What then? Must we turn upside down to look at

them? Or perhaps turn them upside down? Or mew ourselves up, socially speaking, in dim back bedrooms, in order to regain that coveted first impression?

Not at all. Fashion has found a way. It claps a new hat on our friend's head — a hat with a funny nip in it, or a queer wiggle of the brim, or a long, soft droop, or a dashing tilt, or a jaunty up-fling, or any kind of line whatever, that has distinctive meaning and is not the kind of line we have been used to.

What happens? First of all, we are interested, our eyes are challenged anew. Then the interest and the challenge give us a fresh interpretation. We see the familiar face as though it were a stranger's, and we find in it things we have never noticed. The funny pinch in the brim may bring out all its gayety, the long, soft droop may accentuate its pathos, the jaunty up-fling of the side may give it a sudden brave note. I have seen a pretty, refined New England face turned suddenly, by a sweep of brim and a green feather, into the face — pretty and refined still — of one who breaks bonds, blood-sister to Robin Hood.

Passing strange, this witchery of line! Not always working altogether for good. For if there are hats that we "like" on our friends, there are also hats that we "don't like." Naturally. Since a line can evoke good points, it can also evoke bad ones, and the wrong line may accentuate in a face, not its bravery but its coarseness, not its prettiness but its pettiness, not its pathos but its heaviness.

Yet even with this danger, one must welcome the change, merely as change. For the rest of us, from the neck down, fashion provides some possibility of this change that we seem so to need. The waist-line may be "worn high" one year, and "low" the next. Now and then it may even chance — I noted this carefully in a good journal a while ago — that the waist-line will for a short season be "at the waist." Shoulders and hips may be made to seem broader or narrower, neck shorter or longer, by means best known to those who use them. But features cannot be so easily manipulated. At least, if they can, the methods are not, on the whole, regarded as altogether desirable or reputable. Fashion does not quite dare say, "Noses are this winter

being worn retroussé, but next spring the tips will drop a little, and by summer there is a chance that the aquiline line will come in again." Or, "Eyes are to be large and round this fall, but smaller and narrower toward winter." Or, "Lips are fuller than they were in July, while chins promise to be longer and upper lips shorter than for several years."

No, this is not yet done. But instead, a way has been found to get some of the same effects of change. By its means faces seem longer or shorter, noses appear to raise or lower their little tips, eyes seem to grow large or small, slanting or straight, and all by the magic of a line, a shift of mass, a flare of color. The hat! The hat's the thing!



## The Cat and the Bell-Collar

It was, by sorrowful count, the twenty-seventh bird Fur-Cat had killed that spring — song-birds all, and protected by law from gun and trap, but not from claw and tooth. The decree went forth that Fur-Cat must be belled, and a bell-collar was accordingly procured. The offending one was called, and came, rubbing and purring against chair-legs and folk-legs. With a touching confidence he submitted to having the collar fastened on, and it settled most becomingly into its place — a dash of red melting into deep gray fur. When he was released there was a moment of pause, then the purrings and rubbings changed to frantic clawings and chewings, aimed at the millstone and designed to remove it instantly and forever from the outraged person of Fur-Cat. There followed a dash through the open door and across the lawn.

We felt anxious. Would the fluffy neck be clawed to ravelings? Would insanity set

in? Suddenly Fur-Cat reappeared, bounding lightly and gayly, scarcely touching earth. He came on, with little whirls and pirouetings, toying daintily with his tail; he leaped into the air to paw at some creature of his fancy, he chased imaginary worsted balls about over the grass and the piazzas. Finally, in a burst of enthusiasm born purely of his own mood, he shot up a tree and poised himself, in beautiful ease, on an upper branch.

We laughed, and we marveled a little too. Fur-Cat was not young, the days of his kittenhood lay in a dim past. Yet now the kitten in him had reasserted itself — nay, more than reasserted, for in his antics there had been not only all the gay and whimsical impulses of youth, but all the power of maturity. It was a complete, a satisfying, a deeply artistic expression of cat-nature in all its possibilities.

“If this is what a bell-collar can do,” we said, “let us give all cats bell-collars.”

But why stop at cats?

For the incident set me wondering how a bell-collar could be provided for this or that friend of mine — picturing what the effect would be.

I fancy that most of us need to have worked in us just the change that the bell-collar brought about in Fur-Cat. Not that I desire to see every lady of my acquaintance bounding lightly about her lawn, or posturing in the tree-tops, or toying with fancied images of the air. These things were right in Fur-Cat because he was Fur-Cat. They were the expression of his nature and therefore beautiful. It is a correspondingly complete and satisfying expression of their inherent nature that I long for in the good ladies, and good gentlemen, of whom I am thinking.

It is, perhaps, a habit of the Northern races to repress extreme impulses. It is certainly a habit of the New Englander. Do we not know many and many a character whose natural colors are veiled — are overlaid indeed — with the deep gray of reserve or the pale gray of hesitation? These are they whom I want to draw to me for a moment, slip on the bell-collar, — and then see!

Sometimes I have watched this very thing happen. There is, for instance, a young man who in ordinary life is bound hand and foot by his own self-consciousness. Eye and tongue



are held in slavery to it, and he walks as one compelled, looking neither to the right nor to the left. He sits, as it were, always on the edge of his chair. But give him a rag or two of costume, and a song to sing, and a miracle is wrought. He grows taller, his step is firm and elastic, his bearing has the grace of complete ease, he looks the world gayly in the eye, he not only sings his song and acts his part, but he flings out extempore witticisms and meets unforeseen emergencies with blithe unconcern. On a wave of sympathy and success he is carried, not out of himself but into himself. He enters into possession of his own personality.

And when the bell-collar is off, is the spell over? Not quite. Something remains. Each time the transformation is effected it leaves behind it traces. Some day, I believe, he will no longer need the material bell-collar. He will carry one, as Rosalind did *not* carry her doublet and hose, in his disposition.

There are many to whom the bit of rag and the song, or the speech, bring a similar emancipation. But there are more for whom these would never break chains, but rather fasten

them tighter. Fortunately, there are other bell-collars, and not the least among them is raiment. Undoubtedly clothes are abused, yet they have their uses, aside from those of protection. Look at Cinderella! Does any one suppose she would have come into her own place without the help of those gorgeous gowns and those little glass slippers? Does any one fancy her manners were the same, her eyes as bright, her wit as ready, when she sat among the cinders in her dingy rags? No indeed! The slippers and the gowns and the golden coach were an enfranchisement; they were her bell-collar. The Prince was never so dull as to fall in love with a thing of satin and glass. What charmed him was the adorable spirit within, which these had served to release.

Would that we had each of us a fairy god-mother to fasten on us, at the right moment, just the right, the magic collar!

The world, out of fairy books, is chary in furnishing its fairy godmothers, yet most of us have friends at whose touch we become more truly and happily ourselves than at other times. They seem able to endow us,

through some magic of their own, with the beauteous vestments and the glass slippers that free the spirit. These are our fairy godmothers. We do well to love them and pay them good heed, for through them we may enter into such possession of the precious gifts that we need have no dread of the striking hour. This, we must suppose, is what Cophetua did for his beggar-maid. At his glance, the queen in her blossomed, which later all the world could see.

Some there are, indeed, who are able to play the beneficent part, not to one alone, nor to two or three, but to all whom they meet. They go among people flinging bell-collars to right and left. I have seen such a person come into a room, and instantly every one in it grew more vivid, more truly and happily individual. These fairy godmothers themselves are never quite aware of the spell they exert; they think, perhaps, that the room was the same before they entered it. They see people, inevitably, with their bell-collars on, and to them the world never looks as it often does to the rest of us — a little colorless, a little dull, a little unresponsive.

## 30 THE CAT AND THE BELL-COLLAR

Success to their magic wands! It is through them, if at all, that the boulevards of the world grow rich with golden coaches, and the assemblies of the world grow bright with the gleaming robes and crystal slippers of spiritual enfranchisement.

## Clubs among the Cubs

“MOTHER, I don’t think it’s fair!”

Jack burst into the room and dumped himself on the lounge.

“What is n’t fair?” said his mother.

“I got up a club with Ned and Tommy, and they ’lected me president, and then I just went into the house for a minute, and while I was gone they ’lected Tommy president!”

About half the history of the world is typified in this incident, and about three quarters of the history of politics. But the aspect of it that particularly struck me when I heard the story was the extreme youth of the protagonist. Jack was seven years old. It seemed to me that things were beginning early.

As always happens, once my attention was directed to the matter, other little incidents of a similar nature began to present themselves to my notice. Six-year-old Paul was taking me for a walk up the farm-lane.

“That ’th where they ’nithated me,” he

lisped, trying to give his momentous words the air of a careless aside.

"They what?" I asked, surveying the gray rock half buried in huckleberry bushes.

"'Nithated," said Paul slowly.

"What's that?" I asked again.

I was really very stupid, but children bear a great deal from grown-ups.

"Why, don't you know?" said Paul patiently. "You put your hand on it, and hold the other hand up, and then you thay — I muth n't tell you what you thay, becauthe you're not a member; and, anyway" — this was added with a far-away look — "I gueth I've forgotten what it wath."

"So you're a member? What is it? A club?"

"A thoethiety, — the D. L. S."

"What does that mean?"

"That 'th a thecret. It 'th a thecret thoethiety."

"Oh, I see. And what do you do? Is that a secret too?"

"Oh, we have meetingth — we don't do very much — 'thept when there 'th thomebody to 'nithate."



"And that happens rather often, I suppose," I suggested.

"Ye-e-th," doubtfully. "They 'nithated me latht week."

"And who else is in the society?"

"Willie and Kate. They have two other thothietieth, but I'm only in thith one."

While I was still brooding over this conversation, I picked up a slip of paper in a friend's house, and, without realizing that I was intruding on mysteries, read as follows:—

DEAR LILLIE —

I am going to get up another club Its called the S T S If you come over after school I will tell you what it means You can join it and Billy is in it Then we can conect up with the other clubs, and have an afiliation

Yours truly

JAMES BURTON

I was deeply impressed with this document, especially with the "afiliation" idea, and I inquired into the ages of the persons involved in the scheme. James is nine years old, Lillie is seven, Billy is eight. Evidently we are in

an organizing age, and the new generation is not going to be left behind.

Lately, with the desire of finding out something about these matters from another set of witnesses, I have been sounding various parents on the subject. As soon as I mention the word "clubs," I am sure to see some sort of vivid expression flash up in the face of my interlocutor. Sometimes it is amusement, and there follows a funny story about some of the school societies; sometimes it is sarcastic; sometimes it is rather desperate. One mother confesses that she has forbidden her little daughter to belong to any school club whatever; one father has sent his boy away to boarding-school to escape the problems and dangers of high-school secret societies. Obviously, I have stumbled on a live issue, and one that is puzzling wiser heads than mine.

Puzzled I surely am. In "my day" there were baseball clubs for the boys, and sewing or cooking clubs for the girls, and there an end, with no secret societies at all. Moreover, the baseball clubs really played baseball, and the sewing and cooking clubs really sewed and cooked, or tried to. But that was long



ago. In those days, too, the club life of the grown-ups was correspondingly simple; a charitable sewing society for the ladies, where they met to sew and talk; a club for the men, where they smoked and talked politics or science or whatever interested them; and for men and women together, a euchre club, and perhaps a "literary" club.

But the plot has thickened. We are beset by clubs on all sides, and one of the chief problems of life, if I can trust my observation, seems to be how to keep out of the wrong ones and get into the right ones, while, with regard to the officering of them, the predicament of the martyr Jack may be taken as typical. I have even been assured, by a very high authority indeed, that most clubs are started by people who have a craving to be president of something, and who therefore get up a club to meet this "long-felt want." Moreover, it is apparently a widespread desire, this wish to "conect up" with other clubs and make an "afiliation." If, then, the old cocks — and hens — are crowing and cackling after this fashion, what else is to be expected of the young ones?

But I have no intention of drifting into an argument. I am merely observing, and wondering how it is all going to come out. Being, in general, no friend to repressive measures, I have a feeling that it will do little good to prohibit clubs and secret societies among the children. I should rather favor letting them go on, if they must, but giving them something really to do. Societies that chiefly "hold meetings," and "initiate," seem to my plain mind to be in need, not so much of repressing, as of being given a job. And meanwhile, I confess that I am sorry for Jack, I admire James, and I am proud that I know Paul and Lillie.

## The Cult of the Second-Best

All that I know  
Of a certain star  
Is, it can throw  
(Like the angled spar)  
Now a dart of red,  
Now a dart of blue;  
Till my friends have said  
They would fain see, too,  
My star that dartles the red and the blue!  
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furred.  
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.  
What matter to me that their star is a world?  
Mine opens its soul to me; therefore I love it.

WERE I asked to choose the short poem which most suggestively expressed the attitude of our age, I believe I should pause long before rejecting this one of Browning's. If there is one trait more characteristic than another of our spiritual attitude, it is our proneness to challenge the Accepted. "Down with the Obvious" is our intellectual war-cry. It is more than a principle with us; it is a habit. We are growing temperamentally incapable of taking things for granted; we are the sworn enemies of conventional standards, both in taste and in morals; we are the

champions of individual judgment. In the realm of morals this is bringing about consequences so vast that I must back away from even the mention of them. In the realm of taste it is producing conditions, to one aspect of which I should like to call attention.

Which brings us back to our poem. May I be pardoned for laying unhallowed hands on a thing so exquisite! It is like dissecting a butterfly. But perhaps we need not hurt him, and we can set him free again in a moment.

In plain English, then, the poem means, that I love a certain star because of qualities in it appreciated, I find, in a peculiar way, by me. I do not share this appreciation with others. When they press in upon me, to partake of my vision, "it stops like a bird, like a flower hangs furled." But when I, its discoverer and owner, look at it, it "opens its soul to me," and — note well the phrase — "therefore I love it." As for the others — the crowd — let them have Saturn and welcome — Saturn, whose wonders any one can see with half an eye. I admit that Saturn is in a sense greater, but I am happy with my own lesser thing, because it is mine.

There we have it! A turning away from accepted greatness, greatness in the appreciation of which all can take part, to the minor beauty whose enjoyment can be ours alone. It is not purely a love of beauty, then, that dominates us, but a glory in discovery, a pride of ownership, and, perhaps, an instinct of withdrawal from the crowd.

And now we may let our butterfly go again — praying that we have not brushed the least mote of bloom from his wings.

It is this attitude, I think, which is peculiarly characteristic of the age we live in. It is not, of course, the exclusive possession of our own time. Touchstone betrayed it, when, in his best court tones, he introduced Audrey as "A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own." And we can go back even further if we care to inquire curiously. Probably the man who black-balled Aristides because he was tired of hearing him called "The Just" had the same feeling — which is only another illustration of the modernness of the Greeks. He was expressing a dislike of the Obvious, a rebellion against the Accepted, which we can all understand. He was tired of



Saturn. Probably he had some small star of his own that, for the reasons we have just been considering, he liked better.

It is, in fact, a trait of human nature, which just now is getting the upper hand a little more than usual. For the worship of the gods has always been encroached upon by the cults of the demigods. There is something cloying about the continual contemplation of unquestioned greatness, especially if the experience has to be shared with the crowd. This is, of course, the real reason why the orthodox conceptions of Heaven are so unattractive. And, equally of course, this was what was the matter with Lucifer — ah, here at last we are at the very beginning of the whole trouble! He began it! Not Browning, nor Touchstone, nor the Greek mugwump, but Lucifer. He was the first to set up an individual judgment, to rebel against the domination of the Obvious.

There is nobody to blame, then, but a person who is so in the habit of taking blame that he can take a little more without turning a hair. Upon his broad shoulders we may load the restlessness of all the uneasy spirits since the time of the First One.



There is something to be said for them. The Great of the world do get a good deal of handling. They show it a little. The grass is trodden down all around them, their toes are worn blunt by being kissed, and they are bestarred and be-photographed out of all whooping. One can hardly think of them apart from an atmosphere of perfunctory admiration of the tourist sort, to which there clings an aroma of lunch-boxes and notebooks and cameras and picture post-cards. We cannot approach them without feeling ourselves one of a rabble. "Ugh!" we growl, "let's get out of this! Come along over to my Little-Great-One, that nobody else is paying any attention to. Here we are, — no crowd, no noise, — the place is ours!"

Ah, yes, there is indeed something in it. There is a good deal in it. And so the cult of the Little Great supplants the worship of the Great Great.

There is no special harm in this so long as we remember that there is a difference between the Great Great and the Little Great. So long as we do not forget that, with one day of such treatment as the Great Great are

imperturbably submitting to through the ages, the Little Great would be reduced to pulp. And so long as we do not blink the fact that in pursuing our cult we are yielding to our love for exclusiveness.

And though there is something to be said for these uneasy spirits, there is also something to be said against them, certainly when we are concerned with the things of the spirit. For there is a difference between the material and the immaterial Great Great. Take the Matterhorn — it is a Great Great in its own line, no doubt, but perhaps — just perhaps — we might be excused for preferring a lower peak with solitudes around it, to the Matterhorn with a foreground of hard-boiled-egg shells and oiled-paper sandwich-wrappers. I am not accusing the Matterhorn of such a foreground. The Touristland Improvement Society probably keeps it cleared up. I am only suggesting a hypothetical case, in which a material Great Great might lose some of its — shall we call it bloom?

But with the immaterial Great Great the case is somewhat altered. Its audience-rooms may be always thronged, yet we do not have

to dodge the elbows of the crowd, or peer under their hats in order to get a view. We can, in a sense, forget them. Only in a sense, to be sure. For the throng, though invisible, has left its traces. The Bible, for instance, has suffered from too much handling. No one who has been "properly" brought up, can, I fancy, ever read any of its great writings and get a perfectly pure and fresh vision of their greatness. There are no egg-shells and sandwich-papers, indeed, but the fore-ground and the back-ground and the middle-ground are littered with altar-cloths and stained glass, with snatches of hymns and illuminated texts and the débris of sermons. Not with the most intense detachment of spirit can we escape them entirely. If on this account we leave the Bible and betake ourselves say, to the Apocrypha, we shall be free from all this. We can be quite by ourselves, and we shall find many wonderful and beautiful things, but in the end we shall be making a mistake if we do not go back to our Bible again, hymns and texts and sermons and all.

The next greatest sufferer among the Great Great is Shakespeare. It is hard to read

Shakespeare with an undivided mind, because one keeps running up against so many "familiar quotations." Moreover, some of us have "prepared" Shakespeare for the classroom, for college-entrance examinations, for B.A. and M.A. and Ph.D. examinations, and the air of the study hangs heavy about him. I knew a young woman once who felt this so keenly that in selecting four plays to be studied by her class she proposed four of the poorest — one of them not surely authentic — because, as she said, the great plays were so "hackneyed." It seemed to me that though her plight was hard, she had not chosen the best way out. It still seems so. And if we do not find the better way of escape it is partly our own fault.

Can we not walk free with Shakespeare and enjoy his companionship because of this network of trappings — glossaries and notes and quotations and essays — in which we are involved? Do our steps drag? Are our feet clogged? Do we slip harness and escape to some companion whose charm, perhaps, is less, but with whom we can race along untrammelled? The loss is ours. If we were just

a little cleverer, we could do something still better: we could give Shakespeare the wink — he would be ready — and both together we would duck, plunge, twist, and — there we are! Free! and off together up the wind, with none to follow. And then what a day we should have!

From the brightness and the wonder of such a day does it, perhaps, detract something, the consciousness that we are not the first? Perhaps it does, because we are, as we have admitted, human. There is a joy in discovery quite apart from the quality of the thing discovered. The first man to conquer a peak gets something that those who follow never find. But this — the bead on the cup — is not for us, we come too late. Unless, indeed, we may find it in the discovery of some new Great Great among our contemporaries. Some of us may have had intoxicating moments when we have at least thought we had done this.

But for the most part, the peaks have been climbed. Shakespeare and Sophocles and the rest have been read and read. When we say “Wonderful, wonderful, and most wonder-



ful!" we must be content to know that millions have said it before us, and millions will say it after us. And if we are not content, if our pride is humiliated and our love of exclusiveness is outraged by this knowledge, what then? Shall we allow ourselves to be driven by our own weakness eternally to the society of the Little Great? Perhaps, better than rebellion against the Obvious, would be an endeavor to reconquer the Obvious. Perhaps the thing that would pay best of all would be to strive for freshness of mind, freshness of attack, in the appreciation of these same old Great Great.

For the greatness of the Great, though obvious in one way, in another way is not obvious at all, and when we turn aside from them, we are perhaps moved not merely by intellectual priggishness, but also by intellectual indolence. The dainty musical trifle rests us when the great symphony tires us. It is easier to appreciate the little things, the pretty sketches, the rare bits, exquisite but slight, whose beauty we can in a sense see all around. Easy, and also perfectly defensible if we do it only as a part of our æsthetic expe-



rience. But if it becomes the whole of it, we are in danger of falling into a sterile round of easy enjoyment which leaves us where it found us. We shall never grow spiritually keen and muscular in this way. It is as if a man were to spend his leisure all his life in playing jack-straws when he might be playing chess. If we spend all our time on the second-best we shall lose something out of our intellectual and æsthetic equipment, something of virility, something of largeness and breadth, something of the power and the willingness to expend energy in the understanding and appreciation of the greatest things. And this ought not to be lightly given up.

A fresh vision of the Great Great is worth achieving. It is worth waiting for. I had read "King Lear" many times, but once I read it, and suddenly it took hold of me in a new way, and carried me along — breathless, overwhelmed, to the end; I had read the "Antigone" over and over, but once when I came to it, it swept me up into its own clear air: I saw it steadily and saw it whole. Experiences like these, incommunicable as they

## 48 THE CULT OF THE SECOND-BEST

are, are to be above all desired, above all prized. When one has had them it is hard to see how one could for long be content with less.

## An Appendix to Bacon

I HAVE often thought that Lord Bacon might have known even more about revenge than he did, if he had observed it in children. For, being a kind of "wild justice," its features are clearest before they have been blurred by the conventions of a society wherein justice is supposed to have been tamed, if not actually domesticated.

Instances of the juvenile type have attracted my notice from time to time, and I am moved to record three of them, for the use of some future philosopher.

One was a scheme planned by a practical-minded little boy, to take effect against his mother. He spent one entire afternoon, and enlisted the services of his friends, in making what he called "dirt-traps" along the garden walk, — a system of simple levers so arranged that any person who passed would strike the foot against one end of a stick, making the other end fly up and fling a little bunch of earth into his face. Of course the person

passing was to be the unnatural mother; after so much industry on his part, Providence would surely take care of that. I forget whether Providence did, but as I look back, I like the boy's attitude of mind. He has since become a scientist, with a good grasp of the concrete.

Of quite another type was the revenge carried out by a little girl I knew. She had a big brother who teased, and a bigger brother who did n't, because he was too big. Now and then she could pay back some of her scores, but the accumulation of those unpaid touched her soul with gloom. At last the children gave a play, wherein she, as the Princess Ariel, rejected Prince Percival (big brother) and eloped with a poor suitor (bigger brother). At a certain point in the play Percival was repulsed with the words, "I spurn thee, villain! hence! away!" During the rehearsals it was suggested by the coach that the princess might accentuate her scorn by touching the kneeling youth with the toe of her slipper. She did so, gently, tasting the pleasure of this new kind of revenge. But on the night of the performance, excitement unseated such pow-

ers of restraint as a short life had furnished her with; the wild justice burst forth, and the gilt-slippered little foot did not gently spurn, it hotly kicked. The princely lover, unprepared, tumbled over on his side and rolled beautifully "down center." The audience applauded such spirited acting, and perhaps only one of those present guessed how in that moment the wrongs of years had been wiped out by a vengeance that was satisfying because at once public, concrete, and symbolic.

But that which I admire most of all was planned by a little country boy — he became a successful city man — whose heart was filled with bitterness toward his school-teacher. Not for him were the crass forms of immediate retaliation, but at recess, as he ate his apple, he thought, and the gray eyes grew dark and intent. The apple was eaten, but the seeds — ah, they were shut tight in the small fist until an unmolested moment came. Then each little brown speck was carefully pushed under the edge of the school-house and jammed down, by black-nailed fingers, into the earth. The boy went back

to his books, but the poet's brain behind the gray eyes saw into the years to come, — saw the unrighteous teacher still at her desk, the hateful little schoolhouse still standing, while, outside, those little seeds were bursting, rooting downward, and stretching upward; saw the young shoots gaining strength, bracing and straining at the house timbers, till they stirred and cracked; saw the house wrenched and tottering, the teacher grasping her reeling desk, and then — ruins, with blooming apple trees rising in triumph over them!

And meantime, the gray eyes were bent on the book, content to wait until the future should right the past. Magnificent!



## The Embarrassment of Finality

“LIVE as if each moment were your last.” How often I used to come across such advice in the books that I read! At least it seemed often to me — too often. For while I accepted it as being probably good advice if one could follow it, yet follow it I could n’t.

For one thing, I could never bring myself to feel this “last”-ness of each moment. I tried and failed. I was good at make-believe, too, but this was out of all reason.

I still fail. The probability that each moment is really my last is, I suppose, growing theoretically greater as the clock ticks, yet I am no more able to realize it than I used to be. I no longer try to; and, what is more, I hope I never shall. I hope that when my last moment really comes, it may slip by unrecognized. If it does n’t, I am sure I don’t know what I shall do.

For I find that this sense of finality is not a spur, but an embarrassment. Only consider: suppose this moment, or let us say the

next five minutes, is really my last — what shall I do? Bless me, I can't think! I really cannot hit upon anything important enough to do at such a time. Clearly, it ought to be important, something having about it this peculiar quality of finality. It should have finish, it should in some way be expressive of something — I wonder what? It should leave a good taste in one's mouth. If I consulted my own savage instincts I should probably pick up a child and kiss it; that would at all events leave a good taste. But, suppose there were no child about, or suppose the child kicked because he was playing and did n't want to be interrupted — what a fiasco!

Moreover, one must consider the matter from the child's standpoint: he, of course, ought also to be acting as if each moment were *his* last. And in that case, ought he to spend it in being kissed by me? Not necessarily. At any rate, I should be selfish to assume this. Perhaps he ought to wash his hands, or tell his little sister that he is sorry he slapped her. Perhaps I ought to tell my little sister something of that sort — if it was n't slapping, it was probably something else.

But no, five minutes are precious. If they are my last, she will forgive me anyway — *de mortuis*, etc.; it would be much more necessary to do this if I were sure of going on living and meeting her at meals; then, indeed —

Yet there must be something that one ought to do in these five minutes. There is enough that needs doing, — at least there would be if they were *not* my last. There is the dusting, and the marketing, and letter-writing, and sewing, and reading, and seeing one's friends. But under the peculiar circumstances, none of these things seems suitable. I give it up. The fact must be that very early in life — before I can remember — I formed a habit of going on living, and of expecting to go on, which became incorrigible. And the contrary assumption produces hopeless paralysis. As to these last five minutes that I have been trying to plan for, I think I will cut them out, and stop right here. It will do as well as anywhere. Though I still have a hankering to kiss that baby!

I might think the trouble entirely with myself, but that I have noticed indications of the same thing in others. Have you ever

been met by an old friend at a railroad station where one can stop only a few moments? I have. She comes down for a glimpse of me; good of her, too! We have not met for years, and it will be years before we can meet again. It is almost like those fatal last moments of life. I stand on the car-platform and wave, and she dashes out of the crowd. "Oh, there you are! Well—*how* are you? Come over here where we can talk.—Why,—you're looking well—yes, I am, too, only I've been having a horrid time with the dentist." (Pause.) "Are you having a pleasant journey?—Yes, of course, those vestibule trains are always hideously close. I've been in a hot car, too.—I thought I'd *never* get here, the cars were blocked—you know they're tearing up the streets again—they always are." (Pause.) "How's Alice?—That's nice.—And how's Egbert?—Yes, you wrote me about his eyes. What a good-looking hat you have! I hated to come down in this old thing, but my new one did n't come home—she promised, too—and I just *had* to see you.—*Do* look at those two over there! How *can* people do such things on a public platform,

do you see? I'll move round so you can look. — Why, it is n't time yet, is it? Oh, dear! And we have n't really *begun* to talk. Well, stand on the step and then you won't get left. — Yes, I'll write. So glad to have seen you. — Going to be gone all winter? — Oh, yes, I remember, you wrote me. Well, good-bye, good-bye!"

The train pulls out a few feet, then pauses — one more precious moment for epochal conversation — we laugh. "Why, I thought it had started — Well, give my love to Alice — and I hope Bert's eyes will be better — I said, I hoped his *eyes* — *Egbert's eyes* — will be *better* — *will improve*."

The train starts again. "Good-bye once more!" I stand clutching the car door, holding my breath lest the train change its mind a second time. But it moves smoothly out, I give a last wave, and reënter my car, trying to erase the fatuous smile of farewell from my features, that I may not feel too foolish before my fellow passengers. I sink into my seat, feeling rather worn and frazzled. No more five-minute meetings for me if I can help it! Give me a leisurely letter, or my own



thoughts and memories, until I can spend with my friend at least a half day. Then, perhaps, when we are not oppressed by the importance of the speeding moments, we may be able to talk together with the unconscious nonchalance that makes talk precious.

I have never heard a death-bed conversation, but I fancy it must be something like this, only worse, and my suspicions are so far corroborated by what I am able to glean from those who have witnessed such scenes — in hospitals, for instance. Friends come to visit the dying man; they sit down, hug one knee, make an embarrassed remark, drop that knee and pick up the other ankle. They rise, walk to the foot of the bed, then tiptoe back uneasily. Hang it, what is there to say! If he was n't dying there would be plenty, but that sort of talk does n't seem appropriate. What *is* appropriate — except hymns?

When my time comes, defend me from this! I shall not repine at going, but if my friends can't talk to me just as they always have, I shall be really exasperated. And if they offer me hymns —!

No — last minutes, or hours, for me might



better be discounted at once — dropped out. I have a friend who thinks otherwise, at least about visits. She says that it makes no difference how you behave on a visit, so long as you act prettily during the last day or two. People will remember that, and forget the rest. Perhaps; but I doubt it. I think we are much more apt to remember the middles of things, and their beginnings, than their endings. Almost all the great pieces of music have commonplace endings; well enough, of course, but what one remembers are bits here and there in the middle, or some wonderful beginning. If one is saying good-bye to a beloved spot, and goes for a last glimpse, does one really take that away to cherish? No, I venture to say, one forgets that, and remembers the place as one saw it on some other day, some time when one had no thought of finality, and was not consciously storing up its beauty to be kept against the time of famine.

One makes a last visit to a friend, and all one remembers about it is its painful “last”-ness. The friend herself one recalls rather as one has known her in other, happy, thought-

less moments, which were neither last nor first, and therefore most rich because most unconscious.

Live as if each moment were my last? Not at all! I know better now. I choose to live as if each moment were my first, as if life had just come to me fresh. Or perhaps, better yet, to live as if each moment were, not last, for that gives up the future, nor first, for that would relinquish the past, but in the midst of things, enriched by memory, lighted by anticipation, aware of no trivialities, because acknowledging no finality.

## The Wine of Anonymity

LET me not be misunderstood. I am not now thinking of the pleasures connected with the anonymous letter — the letter which, in disguised hand, warns Benedick not to trust Beatrice too far, or advises Beatrice to follow up Benedick and find out what he does between eight and nine of a summer evening. In the fashioning of such epistles there may be — there must be — a certain gratification, but it has never come my way. I have never experienced either the thrill of writing such a letter or the pang of receiving one.

Nor do I mean the fierce but coward joy of asserting, in an open letter, unsigned, that Iago is a liar and a villain, and escaping the annoyance of a libel suit in consequence. This pleasure also I have never tasted, though I really have strong opinions about Iago, while disliking libel suits.

No. The wine of which I speak is milder than this and has no bitter after-taste. Without having either officious warnings or malig-

nant vituperation to utter, I yet find a certain gentle exhilaration in being able to express my thoughts without a signature.

I am, I believe, not the only one to feel this. The other writers in the Contributors' Club,<sup>1</sup> entering its doors, which close softly behind them and tell no tales, and approaching its social hearth in the cozy club-room whose walls have ears, perhaps, but no tongues, — they, too, I notice, carry themselves with a more buoyant and jaunty bearing than the Olympians who sit enthroned in the Body of the Magazine. There is a glare of publicity about Olympus that even the Gods felt — witness the way they slipped into human disguise or drew on the tarn-helm when they wanted to be really at ease. Often, indeed, this was when they were up to mischief, but not always. The Club members are never up to mischief, and yet we like to be nameless. We are not saying anything that we are ashamed of, and yet — and yet — it is such fun to use the tarn-helm!

For there is a certain relaxation that comes when we know that we are not going to be held up to what we have said, that we shall

<sup>1</sup> This paper originally appeared in the *Atlantic's* Contributors' Club.

escape the annoyance of being expected to be the kind of person who said it, whatever it may be. When we meet a man who has written things, we expect him to live up to his signature. Usually he does n't, and then we grumble, "Is n't he the man who wrote ——? I thought so. Well, he does n't look it, does he?" Probably he is tired of being expected to "look it," and does n't mean to, and is glad he does n't.

In spite of Emerson, consistency is a hobgoblin. Most of us cannot help feeling that what we have said one day we are expected to abide by the next, and this makes us careful. We are brought up from youth to think before we speak, and so we do. We think, perhaps, three or four times, and when we have done our thinking we have begun to suspect that we are poor creatures anyway and might better not speak at all; which may be the case or it may not. Now the joy of anonymity is that we speak twice before we think. Perhaps — oh, mad and forbidden pleasure! — we never think at all, we simply speak. The result is that we are absolutely spontaneous and happy. The wine of ano-



nymity has loosened our tongues, and we prattle on in unchecked and artless fashion, and often more pleasantly than when sobered by the cold gray dawn of responsibility.

It is probably the same thing at bottom that makes people so much better company at a masquerade than under any other circumstances. In the circle of the black mask and the domino we have no name, no past, no future, no self to live up to or down to, and the mood that is uppermost need never impose itself upon a later mood. We can be spontaneous and genuine. No wonder we are good company! For on the whole our spontaneous impulses are kindly and gay. We are almost always ready to love our fellow-men for an hour, if we are not thereby committing ourselves to loving them for a lifetime.

It all seems to come back to the same thing — a reluctance to commit ourselves. It is easy enough to be advised, "Let him say what he thinks in hard words to-day, and to-morrow let him say what to-morrow thinks in hard words again." To the visionary and recluse this may be easy; but those of us who



live close to our kind, who take color from them, who can never do anything without being conscious of an effect upon them which reacts in turn upon us — such vacillating and feeble chameleon-folk as these love to run to the cover of the anonymous, they wrap themselves snugly in its mantle and mask, and then — ah, then they step out at ease, they hold the head high, they begin to say, “I think,” instead of “it is sometimes thought,” and “I doubt,” instead of “it appears doubtful.” Ideas come to them with a rush. They have so much to say, now that the saying does not commit them to anything in particular. They can confess their souls without being taken too seriously, or, indeed, being “taken” at all. They can berate the newspapers, and then settle down peacefully to the perusal of the latest murder news, and no one will taunt, “I thought you said you never read the papers.” They can write an encomium on Milton, and then take down Sherlock Holmes unchallenged by any one. They can hurl a philippic against magenta, and then choose a winter suit or the dining-room wall-paper of that color, without fear of

reproach. Will any one say that this is not as wine to one who falters?

Perhaps the fear of consequences keeps us from a few bad acts, but I am convinced that it also deters us from many good ones. It keeps us from being as disagreeable to people as we should sometimes like to be, but it also prevents us from being as nice to them as we now and then have the impulse to be.

I often think of this as I stand beside the track in the country and watch a train rush past. The engineer is usually leaning out of his window, I wave to him, he waves back, we smile in most friendly fashion, and the train flashes by. I am the better for the greeting, and I hope he is. Once I stood on a bridge and watched a slow freight creep along under me. The train men stood or lay on the top of the cars, and as they passed they tossed salutations up to me. I caught them all. It was great fun. But afterwards I reflected, what would have happened if that freight had suddenly stopped under the bridge, as freights sometimes do, or if the engine had blown out a cylinder or something, so that the intercourse of the moment threatened to

be prolonged for an hour or two? I fancy all those genial men would have suddenly stiffened into stolid automata, and I should have had a pressing engagement elsewhere.

This is what keeps happening to us all the time in life. Our human intercourse is constantly being thwarted by our consciousness of consequences. It is especially the case when we are young. Young people feel that they can hardly have an intimate conversation without its ending in a promise to correspond or an invitation to visit. If we keep this attitude as we grow older, the consciousness that a moment's intimacy may entail so much makes us pause before taking the fateful plunge. How often do we draw back in a moment of expansion because we reflect, "Shall we feel the same way to-morrow, or next month?" How many friendly impulses do we restrain because we are afraid the freight train may stop, and something more may be expected of us!

But sometimes as we grow older we come to realize that we have made in part our own burdens, and missed some rare pleasures. We discover that if we are honest and natural,

intimate moments may prove to be not mill-stones but stars. Among my treasures of memory are those flashes of communion with others which have apparently lighted no lamp of friendship needing daily tending. It may have been with an acquaintance — who ever afterward remained, as before, an acquaintance merely — it may have been with a stranger, standing beside us for a moment in a crowded shop; or a seat-fellow in a railroad train. The moment has come, we have recognized it, enjoyed it, and it has passed, but it is none the less prized.

Perhaps if we had more courage we should shake off the tyranny of our own words and acts, and not need the mask and mantle to set us free. But so long as we are what we are, I cannot but think we should be happier, gayer, and no less good, if now and then we dropped our names and spoke without a thought of our own identity, if now and then we donned our mask and cloak and fared forth among our fellows, freed from the restraints of our own personality.

## The House and the Hill

It is an old New England hillside. I say "old" because it usually feels old to me. Its patches of low huckleberry bushes, to be sure, bear every year new and shiny berries, the wild roses straying over its rocks bloom as fresh and sweet as if the whole hillside had been late-created, as though God had only thought of it last May. But those same berry patches have been here for generations, and the gnarled little rose-bushes which bear the tender blossoming shoots are, perhaps, as old as the giant chestnuts near them. The chestnuts themselves are more obviously old, though they toss their creamy plumes of blossom each July afresh, and the rocks — the hillside, being truly of New England, is almost all rock — are older still.

Now and then, walking slowly up one of the faint cow-paths that wind among huckleberry and sumach, I have picked up an Indian arrow-head lying under a ledge as though dropped there but yesterday. It is as if a



wave of the retreating past had swept up and licked about my feet, and I am set wondering about the past yet more remote — so remote that its waves can never stir me with even the tiniest left-over wave of reminiscence.

I have always loved the hill. I felt that I knew it well, and through knowledge and affection had, in a sense, earned the right to call it mine. One day, I set up a little canvas house upon it — one room only, with windows on all sides. And when I entered it and looked out upon my hill I found that something had happened. The hillside had become “outdoors.” It had become this in a new way because I had created, in its midst, “indoors.” Hitherto, as I wandered here, or sat on its rocks, or lay on its thinly grassed sides, I had thought little about its aspects, I had never really held it from me to think about it at all; I had been a part of it, like the wasps among the berries or the bees among the roses. But now suddenly I found that I was holding it away from me.

Perhaps I had lost something; certainly I had gained something. For, as I looked out through the wide, low windows, I found it



more beautiful than it had ever been before — more vivid, more thrilling. There was the western outlook — the hillside falling steeply away toward the gay green of the swamp meadow below, the lane winding at its foot up the opposite hill toward the huddle of gray roofs under dark maples. I had never noticed how the lane “composed” with roofs and maples and swamp. There was the southern — sloping in a tenderer curve, past wood-edges pushing in on both sides, toward the distance where a deep green hill rose into the sky. There was the eastern — a level pasture full of rocks and huckleberries and bounded by woods whose shadows baffled the eye. There was the northern — the rock ledges of silver-gray, rising rough against the blue, with deep-green cedars set stiffly about, and clumped thorn-bushes which in the autumn would be gay with berries. It seemed as if I had never really seen cedars until I saw them framed by the window of my house: delightful New England trees that they are, prim and uncompromising, rough and yet conventional, a little scratchy even to the eye, yet full of a real distinction in the com-

pleteness of their individuality. And sensitive! Responsive in their color to every change of the sky or season, responsive in their delicate sea-weed-like tips to each breath of wind, and swaying to the bigger gusts with their whole stiff, spiring height.

It is not the first time I have had this experience. Often, as I have walked along a country road, idly pleased with the world about me, I have passed an old barn, with great doors flung wide, front and back, so that one could look through them to the meadows behind. It is the same country I have been passing, — fields, bushes, fence-lines, a bit of hill and sky, — but the great doorways framing it in timbers and shadow create thereby a certain enhancement of its values, so that invariably, looking through, one gets one's impression with something added — a heightening of perception that is strangely arresting.

What is it that the big barn doors do? They limit, of course, they cut a little piece out from the wholeness of things, they say to us, "Never mind the rest, take just this, look at it in just this way — and now see how beauti-

ful it is!" They play the artist to us for a moment, forcing upon us our point of view, selecting our subject, adjusting the lights, and — perhaps greatest service of all — suggesting to us, or rather, imposing upon us, that sense of distance that is so necessary a part of the æsthetic experience.

This, too, is done for me by the broad, low windows of my little hillside house — this and something more. For the house gives zest to the hillside, as the hillside to the house, by its contrast of within and without. Outdoors means more to me by reason of having indoors too.

These things have set me pondering — pondering upon the virtues of limitation and the powers that inhere in bonds. Parallels are dangerous things to play with, yet I am tempted to play with one now. We are in a generation that jeers at dogma and is impatient of creeds, yet may it not be that these have done for races what the open barn door does for the passer-by? Engulfed in the cosmos, infinitesimal part of the great whole, we have no real awareness of it. But frame it in dogma, confine it in a creed, and it becomes

ours in a certain vividness of apprehension born of the artificial limits we have set up. True, the race pays a price; it gives up all but the small moiety that can be viewed through that special creed. But the traveler, also, would not linger forever before the same barn door. He passes on, enriched. And so the races have passed on from creed to creed, and in each have found, in some sort, both riches and poverty, enlightenment and ignorance.

It is true with all thought, all feeling, the entire circle of experience. As soon as we define, as soon as we express, we gain something, though we perhaps also give up something. In order to achieve, we must forego. No one, I fancy, ever wrote a poem or painted a picture without being aware, at least dimly, of a vast something that he was giving up. When artists feel this very keenly, struggling against it, striving for the gain without the loss, we sometimes perceive it and call them symbolists. But for us there is no loss, only great gain. For us, all great poems, all pictures, all works of art, are as great doors flung wide, as windows looking north or east or south or west, framing some part of the

beauty of the world which without them we should never so deeply perceive.

But there is a further parallel which I would fain play with. My little house, giving me my center of indoors from which, or even because of which, to enjoy the widening circles of outdoors—it is a symbol to me of my own individuality. The supreme joy, some say, is to lose one's self in the infinite. Perhaps, but let us not forget that there would be no point to this if we had not first a self to lose. It is a joy to me to gaze out of my windows, to go out of my door and enter into the great sea of outdoors that surges up even to the canvas walls of my little house. But these walls are what give its own color to my joy. So it is, too, with the barriers of myself. I should be loath to let them down, slight though they seem, and poor though that within may prove when scanned for its own static values. For how can we appreciate anything save through difference? And what can the infinite be to me unless I can approach it from something that is not infinite?

It is idle to reason about such things, yet still I play with my childish symbols. I even



picture myself, a tiny house, flying through the Cosmos — so small, so unimportant, yet so persistently and joyously finite, so inalienably and joyously possessed of its own indoorsness, in the midst of that wide outdoors. It is a presumptuous fancy, yet when I frown upon it, it only smiles back at me — the fancy that without this element even the hillsides of Nirvana might lack piquancy, — that even upon their limitless reaches I must needs maintain the walls, frail but valiant, of my own self.



## Humor and the Heroine

I HAVE of late been mingling afresh with the heroines of our greater English fiction, holding converse with this lady, sitting a while beside that, sending a word or a smile to another and another, renewing old intimacies with many. They are a fair and gallant company, and it is good to be with them. They are wise and sweet, passionate, strong and brave, beautiful almost always, good on the whole, and, without fail, interesting. Yet I felt the lack of one last grace — a sense of humor. Their families often have it, their servants sometimes, their authors almost always have it, but the ladies themselves, they have it not.

There was Maggie Tulliver: in the heart of a richly humorous society, wherein her own father and mother and aunts were the shining luminaries, she saw none of the humor, she only felt the pain — for it is the light touch that tickles, the heavy impact hurts or stuns. And so, where another nature might

have smiled at the narrowness and the ignorance and the intolerance, her spirit was crushed by it, or driven to desperate rebellion.

And Dorothea! If her grave gray eyes could have been lighted by a gleam of humor, in how different an aspect would the world around her have presented itself to her; she might have regarded Sir James with less impatience and Casaubon with less veneration, she would probably have been saved from being his wife, and would have missed the wisdom and the pain which that experience brought to her. She would have forfeited the joy of cherishing certain ideals, but would have been spared the pain of seeing them shattered. Possibly, too, she would have lost her power of appealing to some natures, as well as her desire to do so—for Mr. Cadwallader, it will be remembered, who was richly endowed with the humorous sense, felt no call to reform the world. Surely, even the faintest light of humor on her face would have repelled Rosamond Vincy in a critical moment, and checked her impulse of confidence. But she would have been happier, perhaps

saner, and, who knows, she might even have built better houses for the poor.

Thackeray's ladies are of another sort, yet humor sits not upon their brows. From *Beatrice Esmond* there dart now and then flashing sword-blades of cynicism, murderous rather than lambent. *Becky's* is *Mephistophelian* wit that blasts, while poor little *Amelia* has no wit of any sort, barely head enough to carry her through the plainer issues of life, and that not without bungling. *Ethel Newcome*, indeed, might under better nurture have sent out a light of humor, but it was turned to flashes of sardonic wit aimed at a social order that she scorned yet bowed to.

Scott's damsels have not even these latent powers. Gay or stately, serene or passionate, they are at one in this. As *Chaucer's* nun rides demure and undiscerning in the roadside company whose humorous aspects *Chaucer* himself so keenly enjoyed, so these ladies move in a world of chivalry and of jollity, touched by emotions of pity and of prudery, of love and of alarm, but never touched by humor.

The *Brontë* novels are without even mod-

erately cheerful accessories — not an expansive butler, a relaxed monk, or a jesting grave-digger — to mitigate the nightmare depression of their down-trodden though fitfully remonstrant heroines, bullied along by their fierce or sullen heroes.

In contemporary fiction there is no better tale to tell. Mrs. Ward has sent out, one after another, a series of strenuous dames, from the Katharine of "Robert Elsmere," with her austere and chilling virtue, to Lady Rose's daughter, with less virtue and more charm, who, if she had been endowed with humorous insight, could better have endured her servitude to so splendid a mark for the comic spirit as Lady Henry. Miss Wilkins's young women pass before us, a pathetic company, with faces worn though sweet, and spirits repressed though brave. The brilliant ladies of our myriad "historical" romances are content to be brilliant merely in face and robing and in the deeds of their lovers; they are not so much great in themselves as the occasion of greatness in others.

Scanning the fair company of heroines, I have indeed found a few upon whose faces

plays a light of real humor, but these exceptions may be counted on one's fingers. There is Meredith's Diana, there is his Clara Middleton, perplexed, ensnared, yet with eyes in whose depths lurk the dancing imps that her creator himself invoked to his aid. They helped her to her final escape from the Monster, goading her and jeering at her by turns as she fluttered under his hand, but always, though with flickering lights, exhibiting to her humorous sense the comic aspects of that same Monster. Stevenson, who made few women, made one, Barbara Graham, in whose eyes gleams the delicious mockery that is both wise and kind. Jane Austen, herself endowed with an exquisite perception of the humor in the society about her, vouchsafed the same gift of vision to the most charming of her heroines, Elizabeth Bennet. With dancing eyes Elizabeth observes them all,—her family, her neighbors, her suitor the unparalleled Mr. Collins, her lover the formidable Mr. Darcy, and his aunt the overpowering Lady de Burgh. She girds at them with her nimble tongue, whose wit, a trifle too sharp-edged at first, is softened by sorrow and fail-



ure until its gayety is only kind. Sweet girl! If Maggie Tulliver could but have looked on her world as Elizabeth regarded hers! A few flicks from Elizabeth's tongue, the sort that proved so beneficial to the high-and-mighty Darcy, would have done Tom Tulliver worlds of good. But Maggie's weapons were of a different fashion, and their shafts always rebounded to wound the sender. Curious, is it not, that with George Eliot's own strong sense for the humor of life, her heroines — or heroes either, for that matter (consider Daniel Deronda and Felix Holt and Adam Bede!) — should have been so utterly devoid of it. One exception there is, in Esther Lyon, the dainty and difficult, who, but for a touch of querulousness, belongs rather in Miss Austen's circle and might have been a more satisfying friend to Elizabeth Bennett than any she possessed.

Yet if we leave the novelists and turn to the master playwright, we find gayety enough. There is Rosalind, the brave and merry-hearted, taking her life's misfortunes in both hands and turning them first to jest and then to joy. There is Viola, breathing a delicate



fragrance of humor where she passes. There is Portia, with a gleam in her eye as she enters in her legal vestments, the gleam kindling into a humorous justice toward the Jew and a humorous jest toward the Christian. There is Beatrice the royal-hearted, with her sound, true laughter and her sound, true scorn,— a queenly heroine, tragedy draws back before her tread, she masters it in its beginning.

Yes, from Rosalind, from Beatrice tragedy falls away. And is this the reason why our heroines for the most part know not humor? Is it that its possession gives one a kind of armor against adversity, an immunity from attack, a mastery of the world in place of subjection to it? Perhaps. There are those who have not this mastery, who are born to be hurt, to be flung down, to be conquered or to conquer only through panting struggle; and these are they the artist seeks, on the watch always for the shock of conflict, the clash of nerves and hearts. The “interesting” temperament is the passionate, the impetuous, not the temperate and controlled. Humor implies a certain remoteness, aloofness, which quenches the ardor of the adventure. It im-

plies balance, sense of proportion, of values, and this brings the poise and control not shared by those who struggle for life in mid-stream. Yet it is the struggle for life that the artist seeks to depict and his public yearns to witness.

Must it be so? Would there not be something yet more poignant in struggle and suffering, if it were accompanied, illuminated by a humorous sense, turned inward to accent the folly of it all? Lear's fool seems to some of us more pathetic than his master by virtue of this very consciousness, and the appeal of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is accentuated by the lurking smile of the sufferer as he regards himself. But who will create for us such a figure? From the novelists there is, as we have seen, little to expect. Among the poet-dramatists, whether we accept the leadership of Ibsen or Maeterlinck or D'Annunzio or Sardou or Phillips, there is scarcely a rift in the cloud of conscious and conscientious seriousness. Obviously, we must wait.

## The Humor-Fetish

IN every period and every land people have had their pet virtues. The Athenians adored wit, and the Spartans health; the Hebrews, at least retrospectively, honored the gift of prophecy; the Romans the virtue of self-control, the Quakers the virtue of peaceableness. Pioneers, the world over, worship bravery and resourcefulness—the virtues of aggression; settled societies appreciate fair-mindedness and rectitude—the virtues of restraint; aristocracies affect the virtues of conformity.

All virtues are good, though perhaps none of them so superlatively and exclusively good as each has at some time been deemed. But just now it would seem that in the general estimation they are all about to yield precedence to one which is, comparatively speaking, a new-comer, usually known as the Sense of Humor.

Not but that men have always laughed. But their laughter was grounded in brutality,

and it was long before it took on any significance that we should now call humorous. The Athenians, to be sure, had attained humor, but later Europeans, in this respect as in many others, did not climb from their shoulders; they had to begin at the bottom, just as if Aristophanes had never made the very heavens rock with laughter. And it was a long way up from the half-Latinized Goth and Celt to Shakespeare and Molière and Lamb and Meredith.

No wonder that we should be dazzled by a virtue for all practical purposes only a few centuries old, and still growing. But we ought not to be dazzled too long, and it really seems as if this new virtue were becoming something of a fetish. A young man said gravely the other day, "One can't get to heaven without a sense of humor, you know." A gentleman writes from England to the editors of an American school paper to inquire into the status of the sense of humor among American boys, as compared with English. The word "humor" is on every one's lips. Humor is the one thing needful. We are warned against choosing friends who lack it; and as for mar-

riage, if both parties do not possess it the altar is but a prelude to the divorce court, if not to suicide. If any man fail of success in any way, we are told that it is because he lacks humor; if he is dissatisfied with existing conditions, this accounts for it. Nearly every human vagary, from eccentricities in dress to curious tastes in the naming of children, is ascribed to the absence or inadequacy of this one virtue. Everything, from dinner-parties to matrimony, must be ordered with a view to this test.

Now, humor is a pleasant thing, and a good thing; but perhaps it is being a little overdone, and overdone with a touch of priggery and a touch of stupidity. The priggery lies in the assumption, always apparent, that we, the speaker and his companions, possess this jewel, this last gift, and we are filled with a self-congratulatory glow as we consider those poor unfortunates who are not thus endowed. It is the Pharisee hugging himself for his own virtues, though the particular virtue chosen is one which was probably not valued by the original Pharisee. I know of nothing more complete than the arrogance of the man who



laughs at a joke towards the man who does not — an arrogance so absolute, indeed, that its only manifestation is often a tolerant and amused pity. As a people, we Americans have assumed for ourselves the position of those who laugh, with the other nations of the world falling into line behind us, according to their respective capacity in this one matter. But some of us who have chanced to encounter the jocular American abroad must have wished that other virtues than humor had been a little more emphasized in his home circle.

The touch of stupidity lies in the assumption that the sense of humor is a simple characteristic, like blueness of eyes, or a definite possession, like pennies, that people may have or not have, in varying and ascertainable quantities. Indeed, whenever we begin to sort people out into classes according to their characteristics, we usually get into trouble. And of all unhelpful classifications, the worst is this one based on the possession of a sense of humor. It is almost as unmanageable as the one based on goodness and badness, so called, which has at least the



sanction of tradition, though it has led to little but bewilderment. We all know Aucassin's frank comments on the personnel of Heaven, as thus determined; and many before and since his time have felt as he did. But if the sense of humor, instead of goodness, is to be made the condition of entrance, the society there will be different indeed, but perhaps even queerer. Thersites and Henry VIII will get in, but Milton and Seneca will not. Lincoln will be safe, to be sure, and Hawthorne may slip past the gate unchallenged, but hardly Emerson. For Cromwell and Napoleon, for Coleridge and John Stuart Mill, there will be no hope. And as for those others whom we know even better than these—Rosalind and Hamlet and Beatrice and Mercutio—it will be well with them; but Perdita and Isabella and Miranda must remain outside with Malvolio and Polonius, although it may comfort them to find Hector and Achilles and Prospero and Horatio in their company.

The trouble all comes from trying to base any classification at all on so elusive a quality as this so-called sense of humor. For it is not all one thing, or even degrees of one thing. It

is so protean a quality, so dependent for its value upon a vast number of delicate adjustments among other qualities of a person's nature, that while it continually invites analysis, it continually eludes definition.

There are as many kinds of humor as there are kinds of people, and the important question is, not whether any one possesses it, but what kind he possesses. Better none at all than a sort that does not chance to harmonize with our own. George Eliot points out somewhere that one of the hardest tests of friendship is a difference of taste in jokes. Why, then, are people thus reckless in invoking a quality so little understood and so apt to lead to difficulties? Every one knows that there is nothing more dangerous than an escaped virtue, but if we are not careful this one will have given us the slip and, in common phrase, "be all over the shop." Indeed, it sometimes seems as if this had already happened, if one may judge from our newspapers, our magazines, our conversation, and the demeanor of our countrymen abroad. Humor is considered the one thing needful, and few pause to ask, What sort of humor? Yet the

time may come when we shall be so cloyed with it that we may beg to be spared any sort. Already it is a relief now and then to find a person who is habitually serious, whose conversation is not continually "lighted up" by the humorous point of view. Such people, we hear, are not good to live with. What a curious blunder! I know such a person, one of the loveliest I have ever had the good fortune to meet, and of humor — humor of any sort — she has not a shadow — or shall we say a flicker? She smiles often, but from pure kindness, not from amusement. She laughs when her friends laugh, but only through sympathy with them. She has sweet, grave eyes, and a mouth gentle and firm and motherly, and her voice is like the touch of a quiet hand. She has dignity without condescension, and a love for all things, both great and small, that is never found wanting. Not good to live with? Those whose household she blesses give thanks every hour of the day, though not always consciously, for the boon of her presence.

Not get to Heaven without a sense of humor? Like Aucassin, we are puzzled. But we

will not be so defiant as he, and choose to stay out. We will rather hope that there is some mistake. Perhaps this ruling is not final. Perhaps Heaven will reconsider.

## In the Matter of "Faith"

READERS of the July "Atlantic" must have found excellent entertainment in Mr. Root's little essay on "The Age of Faith." His subject is one that we are always interested in — the question of the real resemblances between seemingly contrasted periods of human history. By a series of ingenious comparisons, he leaves us with the impression that in spite of superficial differences — of language, of manners, of interests — one age is not so very different from another. The "Age of Reason" was not very reasonable after all, the French Revolution differed "only in externals" from the Crusades of old, and the "Ages of Faith," far from being past, find their counterpart in the age to which we now belong. It is very ingenious, very amusing, and almost convincing.

Almost, but not quite. Perhaps, where we have been so well amused, we ought not to ask to be convinced. Yet there is a serious aspect to this question — so serious that we

cannot bring ourselves to set it aside. For the very essence of human history is here at issue, the essence of human life. And there are some of us, perhaps many, to whom Bergson comes as spokesman for all our deepest instincts when he insists that life is essentially change, that for conscious life, duration means unfolding, that each experience involves the total of preceding experience, and that therefore life, bearing along with it the cumulative values of its own past, can never, in any real sense, repeat itself.

It is this that makes us restive, even while we smile in genuine pleasure at Mr. Root's cleverness. There must, we feel, be something wrong with his argument.

If there is, it lies in his use of a few key-words — words like Faith, Evidence, and the Unseen.

We live, he says, as truly in an age of faith as did our ancestors of Mediæval Europe. Only, whereas their faith fastened itself upon God, and the angels, and the holy relics of the saints, ours concerns itself with other things equally unseen, in whose truth we believe, just as the truth of those was once believed



in, on the authority of others, on the most incomplete evidence, or on no evidence at all. He instances our "faith" in the doctrine of evolution, in the revolution of the earth upon its axis, and in the existence of specific bacteria of disease.

Now it is true that the word "faith" may be used to denote men's belief in these things, and it is also true that the same word has been used to denote men's belief in God and the angels and the saints' relics. But is it true that "faith" is really the same word in both sets of cases? To be sure, in both the word implies belief in something not immediately obvious to the senses; in both it implies a certain confidence in the authority of some one else. But at this point the parallel ends. Indeed, before this point. For the phrase "confidence in authority" may be used to cover many different things, and in this case it is so used. The confidence that men once felt in the authority of their priests is still to some extent paralleled in the confidence which we now feel in our spiritual leaders, whether we call them priests or not; but the confidence which we feel in the testimony of

men like Darwin is something different — neither more nor less valuable, it may be, neither more nor less sure, but resting on a different basis. That it is possible to speak of both things under one name is merely an instance of the inaccuracy of language. A word is not a bullet, that will split a hair and leave the hair beside it untouched. It is more like a charge of fine shot, that hits scatteringly over the whole barn door.

Similarly, as he uses it, the word “faith” covers many different states of feeling, which might be somewhat more particularly discriminated in the words certitude, faith, confidence, and credulity. Moreover, these states are not completely different. They are not marked off from one another by stiff fencing; they overlap, they merge into one another.

If then we agree to let “faith” stand for all these mental states, we may very truly say that our own age, as well as other preceding ones, is an age of faith. But thus understood, this means very little. It goes without saying. For the real question is, what in different ages has been the relative importance, or

prevalence, of these various states of mind. Can we check off our certitude against their certitude, our credulity against their credulity, and so on? If so, the two ages are so far really alike. Or will an uncanceled residue remain, on one side or the other? If so, the two ages differ in this respect by just so much.

Now, of course, no such canceling process can be really applied, though some rough appraisals might be made if one went to work in the right way. But still less can the canceling process be carried out between unlike states; we cannot check off faith against credulity, certitude against confidence. Yet this is exactly what Mr. Root does: for example, he parallels our belief in disease-germs with the mediæval belief in foul fiends. Yet the belief in fiends is clearly a case of credulity, the belief in disease-producing bacteria is, in spite of errors and exaggerations and all manner of mistakes in its details, well on the road toward certitude. The fact that the germs are, for most of us, unseen, and the fiends were also unseen, is a mere accidental parallelism of phrasing.

The logical error here is plain enough. Dis-similars cannot be thus compared. But perhaps even similars are not really such. Perhaps our certitude is not their certitude, our doubt their doubt.

For example: it may be said, that to the mind of the Middle Ages nothing appeared impossible. The modern thinker, we sometimes hear it remarked, is beginning also to say, "Nothing is impossible." But does this mean that we have swung back to the earlier attitude? Not at all. To assume that the tolerance of the modern thinker for "the impossible," springing from knowledge, — even knowledge of his own vast ignorance, — is the same thing as the tolerance of the Middle Ages for the impossible, springing from sheer ignorance and poor method — to do this would be to confuse things as unlike as the "sleep" of a spinning top and the stillness of a dead one.

And if our attitude toward the great realm of the uncertain and the unknown is a different thing from the state of mind in former times, though it may be described in similar terms, so also is our knowledge of the certain and the known a different thing from the

knowledge of earlier men. The thirteenth-century man felt certain, because of the evidence of his senses, that the sun revolved round the earth. We feel certain, in spite of this evidence of the senses, but on account of other evidence, also coming to us ultimately through the senses, that the earth moves round the sun. But no one will seriously maintain that our certitude and his certitude are the same in quality. There have been, particularly since Bacon's time, changes in the manner of our thinking, both in basis and method, which are gradually changing the quality of belief of every kind. The attitude of mind which made it possible for really good thinkers to say, "I doubt, therefore I believe," is obsolescent, if not obsolete. And if faith is, perhaps, changing, religion is certainly changing still more. If there really is, as Mr. Root suggests, a "religion of evolution," — and the phrase seems a very doubtful one, — this means, not that religion is still the same only with its lingo altered, but that men are making for themselves a new religion to meet their new needs. Whether it does or does not meet these needs is beside the question.



As usual, it comes down to a question of the meaning of terms. All through Mr. Root's article he seems to be indulging in a kind of tournament of language, in which the game is to see how many different ideas you can spear with the same word. The word "unseen" is a wonder in this sort of contest. Bacteria are unseen, angels are unseen, demons are unseen, phagocytes are unseen, the ice age is unseen, God is unseen. Therefore they are all of a piece, — bacteria, angels, demons, phagocytes, the ice age and God, — spitted on the same lance and brandished before our somewhat astonished eyes.

And his best lance of all is Faith. Thrusting to right and left, he impales upon its shaft all manner of things — faith in scientists, faith in God, faith in doctors and health officers, faith in witches, faith in priests and in astrologers and medicine-men, faith in astronomical laws.

Success to such tilting! It is fun to watch, and does no harm so long as we remember that it is only a game. But suppose we forgot this, suppose we began to think that these strange spear-mates of the tilting were really



mates? That would, perhaps, be something of a pity, because it would mean the throwing away of such precision of thinking as we have yet attained, which is little enough.

It is just this lack of precise thinking, — this habit of comfortable believing that things on the whole are pretty much as they have always been, and will continue pretty much the same forever, — that is at the root of a good many of our troubles. It is, for example, what helps some of us to believe that there is no church problem, and no marriage problem, — that in these realms no real changes have occurred, and therefore no new adjustments are required.

This is the only excuse for any protest against so delightful a bit of entertainment as is furnished us in the little article in question. Perhaps, however, we have a private and particular grievance, in the fact that the treatment of "faith" seems to spoil the word for us. We have always thought of it as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And it has often appeared to us that "faith" in this sense is growing stronger and keener because more fully aware

of its own realm and its own power. We know, as never before, the difference between the things hoped for and the things possessed. We know, as never before, the difference between the things that are seen — whether with the mind's eye or the body's is immaterial — and the things that are not seen. For this reason, and not at all for those given by Mr. Root, we might be willing to call our own age an age of faith. But if faith must be allowed to mean belief in bacteria and in gravity and in evolution — very well. We must give up the word to these uses and find another to mean what we have thus far meant by faith — faith in the power of love, faith in all the things of the spirit.

And yet — St. Paul's English translators have held the field a long time. Would it not be courteous to let them keep their word, and find another for bacteria and phagocytes?

## “In Their Season”

THERE is a scene in Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" in which the great doctor, wishing to show his power, asks a duchess what dainty she most desires. It being then mid-winter, she considerately chooses "a dish of ripe grapes." Nothing daunted, Faustus produces the grapes, and the duke exclaims, "Believe me, Master Doctor, this makes me to wonder above the rest, that being in the dead time of winter, and in the month of January, how you should come by these grapes," while the delighted duchess chimes in, "Believe me, Master Doctor, they be the best grapes that e'er I tasted in my life before."

The passage often comes to my mind as I glance at the show windows of some "high-class" grocery, and realize that if the play were rewritten strictly up to date Faustus would have to produce something much more spectacular than grapes in January in order to rouse even a passing comment.

I wish it were not so. Not that I begrudge

the duchess her grapes, or Faustus his chance to show off. They meant no harm. But against the tendency that they represent I protest. "That they should bring forth their fruits in due season." This embodies an older idea, and to my mind a better one. I am not prepared to defend everything in the original plan of the world — many things have been and many things can be improved. But this part of the arrangement always seemed to me, in its main outlines, very good.

"In their season." That, to my mind, means strawberries in June and blueberries in July and huckleberries in August. And when I encounter strawberries in January, blueberries in March, and raspberries in December I feel deeply irritated. I do not want all my seasons jogging my elbow at once. It makes me think of a certain sort of boarding-house table, under "liberal" management, where every day one is given six different vegetables, and mostly the same six. Far better one each day for six days, and a chance between to forget it.

I like my spring mud in March, my roses in June, my apples in September, my sleet

and snow in January — all things in their own place. The time for winter seems to me to be the winter-time, and spring-time, I am profoundly convinced, is the time for spring. For one of the most joyous things about spring is that it comes after winter. Cayenne on the tongue, it is said, gives zest to champagne. Reversing the temperatures, winter gives zest to spring. What can it mean, I wonder, to countries who do not have to tussle through a New England winter? And, conversely, should we enjoy the coziness and intimacy of winter if we had not had the great, wide summer to play in first?

Children understand these matters. Look how they take their sports! When the winds of March bluster round our house-corners, it is the time for kites — kites they must have. The cloud-swept skies are full of them — green diamond kites, red and yellow Japanese kites, big modern box kites, old-fashioned brown paper kites with long wagglng tails, sensitively responsive to every stimulus. For a brief season they live overhead, riding still and calm, or performing wild antics, according to the wind or their own inherent nature.



Then their time is past, leaving its traces only in the sorry remnants that nest in the tree-tops or dangle forlornly from the telegraph wires. And after them comes marbles — or is it jack-stones? and then tops, and then roller-skates, and then — ? but this is no child's almanac; I may have the series all wrong, but I have digested the principle, and I should never expect to find a well-regulated child using jack-stones in the top season, or spinning tops in kite time.

It is not so with us older people. And I have been as bad as any. There was a time when I thought it a rather clever thing to take spring by violence. I brought out pussy-willows in December — it is a common enough offense. And when they had gone through all their stages, from silver kitten-paws to pink kitten-noses, then to fluffy yellow or green caterpillars, and finally had shed all these and sent out long pale shoots and masses of white roots, I was embarrassed to know what to do with them. I could not throw live green things like that out in January snowdrifts. I could not plant them, I did not want to keep them in a jar until



April. Finally I threw them in the fire and left the room quickly.

I tried again with dogwood. I picked it in January, and by the end of February it was in blossom. It was beautiful, of course, and I was rather proud—I don't know whether my enjoyment of the results came more from love of beauty or from pride. But after the blossoms had shriveled, there were still March and April. Whenever I passed a dogwood tree, I felt, somehow, uncomfortable. I had had my dogwood. These little dabs at spring simply took the edge off, like a nap just before bedtime.

This, I fancy, is almost always true. There is no greater pleasure than that of watching the seasons—any season, whether of vegetables or of people—observe their own times and develop their own qualities. Moreover, in the opposite habit, the habit that Faustus exemplified and most of our modern institutions encourage, there lurks a real danger. It is the danger that things will be valued, not in proportion to their real goodness or charm, but in proportion to the difficulty of obtaining them. Faustus's grapes had a certain

natural value as grapes, but they had also an artificial value as grapes in January. In his case this meant, the Devil. In our more modern situation, it means a hothouse or a cold-storage plant, and the establishment that goes with it; or it means the equivalent of this in money — which we may or may not call the Devil, according to the way we happen to look at such matters.

Faustus was proud of his Devil, and we are proud of our hothouses or their equivalent, and in the meantime the goodness of grapes as grapes is apt to become a secondary matter — not, perhaps, to the duchess, who merely ate the grapes, but to Faustus. He was not above showing off, neither was the Devil, neither are any of us, though we are usually above seeming to show off, having lost the naïveté of the old doctor and his Mephisto; and this desire blurs our appreciation of grapes as grapes, and of other things. It may, indeed, carry us so far that we shall find ourselves cherishing and exhibiting ugliness, because it is hard to get, and growing indifferent to any beauty that is not rare.

It is not only the fruits and vegetables that

are getting mixed up. The seasons in people's lives seem to be losing some of their individual character, so that we never know just what we are going to get. In some ways this is a gain. For example, the definite putting away of childish things was not an unalloyed good. The complete shutting-off of the child from the confidence of the adult, the complete alienation of the adult from the interests of the youth, these are not habits to cling to. And yet it is a fact that life ought to bring us its various experiences with a certain regard to their seasonableness, and when we see little children going to "problem-plays," and grown-ups spending their mornings over cards and their evenings over picture-puzzles, one is tempted to think that something is wrong. Jaques would have to revise his summary of the seven ages of man, and still more of woman, rather thoroughly to make it pass muster now. There seems to be very little springtime in the lives of to-day; it is mostly summer and Indian summer, while winter — quiet, hospitable, intimate, stay-at-home winter — is getting left out entirely.

If we don't look out, we shall infect Nature.

She is a sensitive creature, highly "suggestible," as the psychologists put it. Some one has maintained that it was purely at the suggestion of the impressionists that she perpetrated London fogs and purple cabbages. She may do other things. There is no telling what she may not do. In imagination I look out upon a world where babes in tailor-made suits play bridge through snow-bound July evenings, where old ladies in pinafores skip about picking daisies in December. But let us not too wildly anticipate! Let us bring ourselves up sharply before it is too late. Let us consider whether we do not, after all, get the most out of things, whether they be grapes or kites or snowstorms or enthusiasm, by taking them in their season.

## Manners and the Puritan

MR. ELLWOOD HENDRICK's article, "We Are so Young," which appeared in the May "Atlantic," will bring satisfaction and refreshment to many of us, who have long felt as he does on the subject of American manners.

The question, as he raises it, is not whether American manners are bad, but whether, if they are bad, we can allow the "older" nations to excuse us on the ground of our "youth."

Many of us must agree heartily with Mr. Hendrick in his protest against the acceptance of this excuse. We may go even further, and maintain that we cannot afford to claim or accept exemption from world-standards of manners on any ground whatever. If, however, we are seeking, not excuses but reasons, I am inclined to think that, at least as far as New England, and those sections of the country which derive from New England, are concerned, we have paid too little attention to



the possible effect on manners of a Puritan tradition.

The Puritan conscience and other things about the Puritans have, perhaps, been a little overemphasized, but it is, I hope, not altogether fanciful to suggest that the habits of mind which fostered the Puritan reaction and which were in turn fostered by it, are not of a sort which would blossom and bear fruit in comeliness of manner and of phrase.

For this was a reaction from what? From what seemed to them empty ritualism, with its attendant evils of worldliness, vanity, subservience, easy-going acceptance of authority, shirking of individual responsibility. These things were embodied in the court and the cavalier, in the papacy and hardly less in the episcopacy. They wore, it was admitted, a pleasing shape, but the heart of them was rotten.

But reactions always swing too far, and the Puritans proved no exception to the rule. In casting off worldliness, they cast off, also, some of the courtesies of life. In condemning subservience and easy-going, they condemned also deference and tolerance. In put-



ting aside vanity and untruth, they gave up a certain daintiness and comeliness in the ordering of life. Not necessarily all at once, and certainly not with any intention. It is conceivable that the effect of this attitude might not be apparent at first. I do not know what were the manners of my ancestors; they may have been as finished as any courtier's; but I know the manners of some of their descendants, and I am sure no court would find them appropriate.

The old world, and the older religion, stood for the efficacy of ritual. "Never mind about thinking," it said in effect, "there are those who will do that for you, in government, in learning, in religion. All you need to do is to perform the rites as they are laid down for you. This way lies salvation."

The Puritan responded, "This way lurks damnation. Ritual is nothing; nay, it is worse than nothing if it comes between you and the truth. See to it first of all that your heart is right. Examine yourself sternly and cast out hypocrisy. All else matters little. No authority can do a man's thinking for him. Each for himself, men must face God. Ob-

servances, ceremonies, are Popish abominations. What does it matter if the outer man be altogether pleasing, so long as the soul of him is damned?"

Now, whatever might be the first effect of such an attitude, the ultimate effect could hardly help being a minimizing of the importance of all the externals of life. The theory might actually justify a good deal of this, and practice might tend to go even further than theory. For when once you have said that if the heart is right externals are unimportant, it is easy, by a confusion of thought very common, to assume that externals are not merely subordinate to the things of the heart, but are actually at war with them. The phrases "empty form," "hollow sham," "rough honesty," "rugged virtue," indicate a tendency to regard the inner and the outer virtues as antagonistic. Has a man pleasing manners and courteous address? His heart may nevertheless be black. This does not, indeed, warrant us in assuming that because he has pleasing manners his heart is therefore black, yet the passage from one conviction to the other is curiously easy.

The quality that New Englanders worship is sincerity, but they can with difficulty conceive a sincerity that is not also a little rough and blunt. Polish rouses their suspicion. They can appraise a rough diamond more easily than a finished one. I suppose we all know the New England mother who says, "Manners are all very well, but what I care about in my children is their morals. I would rather have my children truthful and good than have them learn to bow gracefully and say, 'Pardon me.'"

If one suggests in answer that these things are not mutually exclusive, that not all rude children are truthful nor all well-mannered ones hypocrites, she looks at one a little askance. She is of those who traditionally and sincerely believe that the French are vicious in proportion as they are polite, since honesty must of necessity be "rugged."

Such people have no sympathy with the theory that the way you behave reacts upon the way you feel. They will, perhaps, admit that if you do a definite service for some one, you are more apt to feel kindly toward him, but it has never occurred to them to go

further and admit that if you behave courteously, it makes you feel more courteous inside; that if you go to meet a person as if you were glad to see him, it makes you actually feel more glad; that if you kneel, it may make you actually feel more reverent. If it did occur to them, they would repudiate it as sanctioning hypocrisy. Why it should be more hypocritical to speak pleasantly and with deference to people whom you do not care for than it is to give soup or coal to other people whom you do not care for, they could not, perhaps, fully explain.

Perhaps this attitude is not quite as unreasonable and unlovely as I am making it appear. I am stating it a little perversely, to make my point clearer. As a matter of fact, New England is not alone in admiring blunt honesty and rugged virtue, and in distrusting a smooth exterior. It was not a Puritan who said that a man might smile and smile and be a villain. Yet, when New Englanders quote this, they forget that the particular villain in question was the only smiling one the master created. Did he realize, instinctively, perhaps, that to smile and smile and still

be a villain a man must be an arch-villain indeed?

At all events, these traditions have found in New England a soil of peculiar richness, and they have flourished exceptionally well. Without any explicit assertion that to bow is vice and to smile is villainy, there has often seemed to be an instinctive feeling that the truly honest and high-minded will not stoop to garnish their lives with such trumpery trimmings.

Now it should of course be remembered that people's principles never have quite the influence that we might expect them to have. Human nature is an imperfectly unified conglomerate, shot through here and there by a ray of principle — if one may use the word "ray" of that which seems so often to darken rather than illumine. Principles are nothing in themselves. They have to be held by particular persons, and they are held in all sorts of ways. Some carry their principles as certain folk do horse-chestnuts, — in their pockets, as a specific against disease, — and then go along much as if they were not there. Others wear them like a garment; but there



were, proverbially, many ways of wearing the toga. Others again give their principles a more intimate reception. But in such intimacy the influences are reciprocal: often, by the time a principle has penetrated through a temperament it would not know its own countenance.

So with the New Englander. It is not in every individual that the New England tradition has had its perfect work. I know many in whom it has not. I know some in whom it has — people of unflinching honesty, of clear integrity, of real benevolence, whose manners are distinctly grim, and whose feelings of affection and devotion, deep and strong as they are, find no habitual expression in ways of pleasantness. On the other hand, there is in New England a body of people, equally belonging to it, who have not shared this distinctively Puritan tradition.

In almost every New England town, while there are many Nonconformist churches, — Presbyterian and Congregational and Baptist and Methodist, — there is usually also one Episcopal church. It is often the littlest one, it is almost always the prettiest. The others



are stern and uncompromising — four walls and a roof, windows and a door, and perhaps a steeple for the bell. The best of them have, in their own way, a very real distinction. But the little Episcopal church has something different. Shall we venture to call it charm? It nestles beside the village street with a cozy air, it encourages vines to grow over it. It is pleasant and propitiatory and adaptable in every line. And within, the congregation and those who lead in the service, have usually something of this same quality. Voices are a little less strident, manners are a little more gracious, than in the other churches.

I knew a young man who claimed that he could tell an Episcopalian by her hats. This, I think, is going too far. I should dislike to predicate of any denomination the eccentricities patent in most women's hats. But, taken in moderation, there is something in it. Of course, there are exceptions: not all Episcopalians have pleasant voices, nor all Presbyterians nasal ones. Especially in the cities, where the church influence is but a tiny strand among a multitude woven into each life, all such differences tend to disappear. And even

in villages, I have seen Episcopal churches as ugly as the worst of the Nonconformist, and I have seen Presbyterian churches that were — well, they were by strangers persistently mistaken for the Episcopal.

Yet it seems to me not unnatural that this difference, typically, should exist. For the Nonconformists deliberately broke with a tradition that had its own ripe beauty. They distrusted charm. They saw an antagonism between beauty and truth. They avoided the ways of pleasantness. They felt that conventions and convictions could not dwell together. In all this there was gain and there was loss. And when, as all rebels against convention inevitably do, they erected their own conventions, these were relatively stern and barren, and a little ungracious.

All this while I have spoken of New England, which is a small part of the United States. But the West, so far as it is not foreign, was settled from New England or from the South, and its pioneer past is nearer by many generations than our own, so that other elements enter into the question of manners. The South, again, is preponderantly Episco-

pal — at least the South that we usually think of. And this South has, so far as I know, not had its manners often called in question. Whether this is a mere coincidence, or whether its Episcopacy has really been a contributing cause, I cannot say.

In any case, this is not a defense of Episcopacy nor an arraignment of Nonconformity. It is a study of possible tendencies involved in two rather different attitudes toward life. Each is beset by dangers, each achieves its characteristic victories. The sins of Nonconformity are the sins of presumption and intolerance, the sins of ritualism are the sins of formalism and indifference and superficiality. The virtues of the one are those of independence and honesty and devotion; the virtues of the other are those of tolerance and deference and kindness. It is, to some extent, the individual virtues contrasted with the social virtues.

But all of these are good, all are necessary to society, and the pity is that they have not always been able to live together companionably; that one set should drive out the other. Perhaps it does no harm to remind ourselves

that these two attitudes are not the only possible ones. As interpretations of life, Non-conformity and Episcopacy can learn from each other, and the outcome may conceivably be something better than either.

## A Matter of Planes

“My sister and I get along beautifully together: she cares only about the big things of life, and I care only about the little ones.” This remark, made to me once by a friend of mine, comes into my mind every now and then, and I am increasingly amused by its astuteness. For nothing seems more capricious than the basis of our harmonious intercourse one with another. We constantly see people whom we would aver to be incompatible, living serenely at peace, while others, whose cordial agreement we would as confidently predict, are quarreling scandalously. I believe my friend’s remark may throw some light on the matter. It amounts to this: people on the same plane may clash, people on different ones cannot. It is the grade-crossings that make trouble.

Let us see how it works. Here are Benedict and I living happily together, although our acquaintances would “never have expected it.” We are both of us possessed of



strong convictions, but they happen not to concern the same things. For example, I put sugar in my coffee. I think that is the way to take coffee, and of course I always put it in Benedick's cup too. Now Benedick does n't care, — he would scarcely notice if I dropped an onion in, because he is thinking about civil-service reform and other large matters. As he drinks his coffee he talks to me of these things, which I regard as unquestionably of vital importance, but unquestionably not of vital interest. Yet Benedick talks well, and it is very becoming to him to be deeply in earnest, and so I like to listen to him. Thus we get along together very happily. He accepts my little habits, and I accept his big principles. The adjustment is perfect.

On the other hand, there is a certain lady who sometimes visits us. She drinks her coffee without sugar, and she never sits at breakfast with us that she does not evince real uneasiness as she watches the white cubes being dropped into our steaming cups. Benedick has never even noticed that she is uneasy, but I have, because, — well, because I am living on her plane; for I myself am al-



ways conscious of a distinct feeling of annoyance when I see any one put sugar on lettuce. Nor is this the only ground of discord between us. She has the habit of rising at half-past six every morning, and taking a cold bath before breakfast. She is never late. I often am, and I loathe cold baths, except in the ocean. Accordingly, when I come down, I find her awaiting me, covered with meritoriousness as with a garment, and I feel myself her inferior, a feeling which I resent but cannot escape. I find no refuge in philosophy, for I have no more philosophy than she has. No, we are on the same plane, and we are always colliding.

On the other hand, Benedick likes her very well, but for his part cannot get through a meal comfortably with his uncle, because they disagree about trusts and the tariff. Yet his uncle and I always enjoy each other's society. He takes three lumps of sugar in his coffee and none at all on his lettuce; he regularly oversleeps the breakfast hour and apologizes handsomely for it afterwards. He has, in fact, what I consider a comfortable set of habits, and his theories do not disturb me.

Personally, I find it pleasant to live with people who will let me arrange the unimportant features of life, while I am quite ready to let them settle what one of my teachers used to call its "cosmic principles." I can understand one's enduring martyrdom for the sake of details of taste, but not for such large matters as Truth or the Hereafter, which seem to me abundantly able to take care of themselves.

I wonder if this explains why men are less apt to quarrel with women than with other men, and women less apt to quarrel with men than with other women. For the lives of men and women are doubtless on quite different planes; they are not apt to feel strongly about the same things, and thus each is indulgent toward the other's convictions, not being deeply touched by them. Have you ever noticed at a dinner-party, when one of the men is telling a good story, the difference between the attitudes of the other men and of the women? The women — except perhaps the wife of the speaker — listen easily, receptively; the men listen restlessly, each alert for a chance to follow up the tale with one of his own. For it is perfectly well understood

that women are not required to tell good stories at dinner, and so a woman can enjoy them all irresponsibly, while a man feels in each one something very like a challenge.

On the other hand, when either sex invades the other's sphere, there is apt to be trouble. We all know how a woman, the ordinary, normal woman, feels when the man attempts to "interfere" in the household; and a man, the ordinary, normal man, has a similar objection to women's invading his province. In Germany, at a university function some years ago, an old professor in conversation with a young American woman expressed himself rather positively on some economic question. She, being fairly well grounded in economics, ventured to differ, and began to give her reasons for so doing, when he interrupted her with a gesture of surprise and irritation, and the remark, "I am not accustomed to hear myself contradicted by young women."

But I suppose some one may object, "Why must people on the same plane inevitably collide? Why cannot they run companionably parallel?" And indeed this has an attractive sound; but people's lives do not run

on artificial tracks. They may move along easily side by side for a while, but then — crash! The collision comes.

If you still doubt, try two experiments. Find two people deeply interested in theological theory, and apparently in agreement, and set them discussing the matter with each other in a really exhaustive way. See if they do not separate with some little mutual disapproval, if not distrust. “Ah! Mr. —— is not so sound as I had supposed.” Then, to make the test on the little things of life, take two people the most harmonious possible, find them in an amiable mood, — I will even allow you to give them a good dinner first, — and then set them the task of choosing wall-papers for their country home. Need I describe the outcome?

Ah, no! Our only safety lies in non-conflicting levels. You who are entering on a matrimonial or otherwise friendly compact, put not your trust in a harmony based on positive agreement: it is shifting sand beneath your feet. Ground your happiness in a nice dovetailing of eager conviction with tolerant indifference, and you are safe for a lifetime.

## A Meditation Concerning Forms

It was years ago, in Heidelberg. A group of young Americans, strolling down one of the quaint old streets of the town, approached the office of the American Consul, before which hung an American flag. As they passed the house one of the young men took off his hat. The man beside him looked at him, then glanced quickly about, as men do, to locate the person he was greeting. Another of the party fell back and said to him, "Did you see a friend?" When one is abroad, chance meetings gain in importance. The young man smiled. "Why — yes — a friend of mine — and of yours too, I suppose." He pointed back toward the flag, which they had now passed. "Oh!" said the other, feeling a little flat.

"You see," went on the young man, a little sheepishly, — an American man is always sheepish when detected in what may seem a bit of sentiment, — "I served in the militia a good while, and I got in the habit of



saluting the colors; and over here — somehow —”

“Is he apologizing because he saluted his flag?” broke in one of the young women. “I think it’s the rest of us that ought to apologize.”

The party moved on, and the incident was forgotten until, years afterward, one of the group learned that it had borne fruit: it had set a fashion, established a tradition. For since that time Americans in Heidelberg have always saluted their flag where it hangs before the office of their consul.

All this came into my mind last winter while I watched another little scene, this time in our own country, in a New England city. The President of the United States had been a guest in a house where some of us had been asked to meet him. The President was taking leave, and I made one of a group at a window watching the Chief Executive and his escort take their places in the automobiles. Groups of men and boys, who had in some way discovered what was happening, were lounging about on the street corners, gazing curiously at the Presidential party. The



honorable guests and the honored host exchanged salutes, and the motor-cars moved off, while the crowd watched, with its hands in its pockets.

As the group in the window looked out at the scene one of them exclaimed: "Well! if that is n't the limit!"

"What?" I asked.

"Why, did n't you see? Not a man of them saluted. They just rubbered!"

Every one laughed, then we grew grave. "What an example for those small boys!" said some one. And we fell into a discussion of American manners compared with European.

Again, last summer, I was one of a huge audience witnessing an outdoor pageant. It was evening, band music filled the air, spectacular performances were going on in a brilliant electric illumination. All open spaces were thronged and bleachers were full. Suddenly a few people among those on the bleachers rose to their feet. "Down! Down in front! Sit down, can't you?" was variously shouted by those behind, and there were growling comments about people who

stood up when, if everybody sat down, everybody could see. The offenders remained standing. The growling comments went on, until suddenly some one muttered, "Shut up! It's 'The Star-Spangled Banner'!" Whereupon the comments died away, and before the band had ended the bleacher crowd was all on its feet, half ashamed, half amused.

Now, I find that these three scenes group themselves persistently in my mind, and persistently recur, producing an undercurrent of speculation and perhaps even of moralizing. "Ought these things so to be?" I wonder. We Americans are often congratulated, we often congratulate ourselves, on our emancipation from conventions, from forms, from traditions. But are we, I wonder, altogether to be congratulated? Is it entirely to our credit that we are able to stand on street corners with our hats on our heads and our hands in our pockets while our Country, embodied in its Chief Executive, passes by? Shall we unreservedly felicitate ourselves that we can stroll past our country's flag without an impulse to salute it? that we can hear one of our national

hymns without an impulse to rise? Is this emancipation, or is it something else?

Certainly, informality and unconventionality are good things within limits, [but are we perhaps passing these limits? For, as psychologists tell us that we cannot think long without words, so perhaps it is also true that we cannot feel long without acts — and acts are forms. Unquestionably the spirit of loyalty may exist while one's hat is on. But I wonder if taking off one's hat may not perhaps give it a bit of encouragement — like a friendly pat on the shoulder of a boy who is doing well.

Moreover, among the young people who are growing up among us, who "know not Joseph," who think of war as something in a textbook, and loyalty as something mentioned in poetry and history — among these, would it not give some suggestion and stimulus to the spirit of patriotism, innate in all of us, if they saw those around them giving some tangible evidences of the feeling? It is undoubtedly true that in some cases a feeling grows through being repressed, but it is much more often true that it grows through being

expressed. To throw stones at a cat tends to make a boy cruel, while to feed it and pet it and care for it tends to make him tender-hearted. The feeling causes the action, but the action reacts on the feeling. This is the vital circuit.

So it is with the feelings of loyalty and patriotism. From the ages of savagery downward, kings and priests, whether they formulated the theory or not, acted in accordance with sound psychology when they instituted elaborate ceremonials by which the people might give expression to their feeling of reverence. We do not wish to return to barbarism. We do not even wish to wrap ourselves about in all the forms and ceremonies of modern European life, as they appear in some of its phases. But I wonder whether, in throwing off these cumbrous vestments, we have not got rid of a little too much. Might there not be something midway between the full regalia of a coronation procession and — let us say — a bathing suit? I wonder, to change the figure, whether, in our reaction from all formality, we are not in danger, as the Germans say, of “throwing out the child with the bath.”

## The Tyranny of Things

Two fifteen-year-old girls stood eyeing one another on first acquaintance. Finally one little girl said, "Which do you like best, people or things?" The other little girl said, "Things." They were friends at once.

I suppose we all go through a phase when we like things best; and not only like them, but want to possess them under our hand. The passion for accumulation is upon us. We make "collections," we fill our rooms, our walls, our tables, our desks, with things, things, things.

Many people never pass out of this phase. They never see a flower without wanting to pick it and put it in a vase, they never enjoy a book without wanting to own it, nor a picture without wanting to hang it on their walls. They keep photographs of all their friends and kodak albums of all the places they visit, they save all their theater programmes and dinner cards, they bring home all their alpenstocks. Their houses are filled with an undigested



mass of things, like the terminal moraine where a glacier dumps at length everything it has picked up during its progress through the lands.

But to some of us a day comes when we begin to grow weary of things. We realize that we do not possess them; they possess us. Our books are a burden to us, our pictures have destroyed every restful wall-space, our china is a care, our photographs drive us mad, our programmes and alpenstocks fill us with loathing. We feel stifled with the sense of things, and our problem becomes, not how much we can accumulate, but how much we can do without. We send our books to the village library, and our pictures to the college settlement. Such things as we cannot give away, and have not the courage to destroy, we stack in the garret, where they lie huddled in dim and dusty heaps, removed from our sight, to be sure, yet still faintly importunate.

Then, as we breathe more freely in the clear space that we have made for ourselves, we grow aware that we must not relax our vigilance, or we shall be once more overwhelmed.

For it is an age of things. As I walk through the shops at Christmas time and survey their contents, I find it a most depressing spectacle. All of us have too many things already, and here are more! And everybody is going to send some of them to everybody else! I sympathize with one of my friends, who, at the end of the Christmas festivities, said, "If I see another bit of tissue paper and red ribbon, I shall scream."

It extends to all our doings. For every event there is a "souvenir." We cannot go to luncheon and meet our friends but we must receive a token to carry away. Even our children cannot have a birthday party, and play games, and eat good things, and be happy. The host must receive gifts from every little guest, and provide in return some little remembrance for each to take home. Truly, on all sides we are beset, and we go lumbering along through life like a ship encrusted with barnacles, which can never cut the waves clean and sure and swift until she has been scraped bare again. And there seems little hope for us this side our last port.

And to think that there was a time when

folk had not even that hope! When a man's possessions were burned with him, so that he might, forsooth, have them all about him in the next world! Suffocating thought! To think one could not even then be clear of things, and make at least a fresh start! That must, indeed, have been in the childhood of the race.

Once upon a time, when I was very tired, I chanced to go away to a little house by the sea. "It is empty," they said, "but you can easily furnish it." Empty! Yes, thank Heaven! Furnish it? Heaven forbid! Its floors were bare, its walls were bare, its tables — there were only two in the house — were bare. There was nothing in the closets but books; nothing in the bureau drawers but the smell of clean, fresh wood; nothing in the kitchen but an oil stove, and a few — a very few — dishes; nothing in the attic but rafters and sunshine, and a view of the sea. After I had been there an hour there descended upon me a great peace, a sense of freedom, of infinite leisure. In the twilight I sat before the flickering embers of the open fire, and looked out through the open door to the sea, and

asked myself, "Why?" Then the answer came: I was emancipated from *things*. There was nothing in the house to demand care, to claim attention, to cumber my consciousness with its insistent, unchanging companionship. There was nothing but a shelter, and outside, the fields and marshes, the shore and the sea. These did not have to be taken down and put up and arranged and dusted and cared for. They were not things at all, they were powers, presences.

And so I rested. While the spell was still unbroken, I came away. For broken it would have been, I know, had I not fled first. Even in this refuge the enemy would have pursued me, found me out, encompassed me.

If we could but free ourselves once for all, how simple life might become! One of my friends, who, with six young children and only one servant, keeps a spotless house and a soul serene, told me once how she did it. "My dear, once a month I give away every single thing in the house that we do not imperatively need. It sounds wasteful, but I don't believe it really is. Sometimes Jeremiah mourns over missing old clothes, or back

numbers of the magazines, but I tell him if he does n't want to be mated to a gibbering maniac he will let me do as I like."

The old monks knew all this very well. One wonders sometimes how they got their power; but go up to Fiesole, and sit a while in one of those little, bare, white-walled cells, and you will begin to understand. If there were any spiritual force in one, it would have to come out there.

I have not their courage, and I win no such freedom. I allow myself to be overwhelmed by the invading host of things, making fitful resistance, but without any real steadiness of purpose. Yet never do I wholly give up the struggle, and in my heart I cherish an ideal, remotely typified by that empty little house beside the sea.



## The Tyranny of Facts

ONCE upon a time, very long ago, when I was young, I used to dream of all the things I would some day possess. As time went on, the nature of the things I coveted changed, but not the dream of possession. Then, as some of these dreams found their fulfillment, a fundamental reconstruction of ideals took place. I dreamed no longer of possession, but of enfranchisement; I no longer wished for more things, but only for the power to cope with the things I already had — or that had me. And at last my strongest desire was to possess nothing — but friends.

Of late, I notice, the same thing that happened in my house has happened in my head. There was a time when I loved to collect information. Facts — all facts — were precious to me, and I loved to feel them making piles and stacks and rows in my brain. Everything was welcome, from the names of the stars to the prepositions that governed the Latin ablative, from the dynasties of Egypt

to the geography lists of "state products" — "corn, wheat, and potatoes," "rice, sugar, cotton, and tobacco." While this mania was upon me, dictionaries allured me, cyclopædias held me spellbound. I was even able to read with interest the annals of the "Swiss Family Robinson," a book which presents more facts per page than any other volume in that great and unclassified mob called "fiction."

What were the causes and processes of change I cannot say. Possibly an overdose of facts produced reaction. At all events, the change took place, and the time has now come when, just as I deprecate the arrival of new possessions in my house, even thus do I deplore the stream of information whose constant, relentless flow into my unwilling consciousness I am powerless to prevent. For I find that whereas during my years of enthusiasm for accumulation everything combined to help me, now that my endeavors are reversed the powers arrayed against me are mighty. The Sunday newspaper, which is the embodiment of information invading the last stronghold of peace, — this I can and do bar

out of my house; but on week-days the newspapers have things their own way. They invade my morning quiet, they disturb my evening calm, they render the male section of my family indifferent to morning coffee and dilatory before evening soup. Nor am I myself exempt from the baleful influence. Various digests of the "world's news" lie constantly upon my table, and I am occasionally weak enough to think it my duty to read them, "so as to be a little intelligent, you know," as a firm-minded aunt of mine is in the habit of saying. In this unwilling endeavor to acquire intelligence I stultify what little of that faculty I may have been originally endowed with, I stuff my brain with cotton, in the form of "science brevities," "literary jottings," "religious notes," "political news," and so on. And then for a time a violent reaction sets in, and I eschew all informing books and hie me to Lamb, to Shelley, to Malory, to Homer. These are my joy, my recreation, my tonic.

Nor is it only the newspapers and their kind with which I have to contend. My dearest friends are traitors and my foes are

they of my own household. For they cling to the possessions of their brains, they are busy amassing more, they survey them with satisfaction and exhibit them with pride, so that I am driven to question, which of us is right? Is the change in me due to growing wisdom or to oncoming senility?

In my outdoor life the same issue is constantly presenting itself. I love birds and flowers. In fact, I believe that I honestly love that grand and joyous conglomerate usually called "Nature." There was a time, moreover, during that remote period of which I have spoken, when I possessed a respectable amount of information about these matters. Just as, in my lust for physical possessions, I collected butterflies and eggs and flowers, even so in my lust for intellectual possessions I accumulated knowledge — I learned all their names, I knew all about their wings and their spots and their petals and their seeds and their roots and whatever else appertained to them. It amazes me now when I occasionally stumble upon some record of my former knowledge. I feel like saying, with the old woman in *Mother Goose*, —

“Lawk a massy on me!  
This is none of I!”

But following my feeling of amazement there usually comes one of relief — how glad I am that I don't know all that now! I still love “Nature,” but when I have found the lovely flower in the meadow or the deep wood, I do not hasten to pick it and bring it home and analyze it and press it. I am content to lie down beside it a while and enjoy its companionship, its beauty, its fragrance, whatever it has of charm and comeliness, and then I leave it and pass on. When I hear a sweet bird-note, I pause and listen as it comes again and yet again. But I do not pursue the bird with an opera-glass to count its feathers and estimate its dimensions, and then hurry home to my “bird books” to “look it up” and make a marginal note of the date. When I see butterflies fluttering about the lilacs and the syringas and the phlox, I stand quiet and watch them — those huge pale yellow ones banded with black that love to hang about lavender flowers — do they know what a lovely chord of color they strike? those dark ones with blues and greens splashed on their



wing-edges, those rich rusty-red ones, with pure silver flashes on their under sides, those little jagged-winged beauties with all the colors of an Oriental rug — old reds, old blues, old yellows — all mottled together. Ah, they are all delightful, and as I watch this favorite and that, holding my breath lest I scare him into flight, I find myself smiling to think, I knew his name once!

But most of my friends still know their names. They have opera-glasses and notebooks, and a prodigious amount of information. They keep tally of the number of birds they see in a day or on a walk or on a drive, of the number of new birds or flowers they recognize in a season. They call me up by telephone to tell me that the beautiful creature we had seen in a certain tree was, after all, not the *Apteryx Americanus*, but the *Apteryx Warrensis*, a much rarer variety of the same species, with longer tail feathers and two more white feathers in the wing than his commonplace cousin.

Amid such whirlpools of information I feel that I am unable to hold my own, and so I try to drift out, but now and again I am

drawn in, and I find myself growing stupid as I bend over my friends' bird books. I give myself headaches looking at their butterfly cabinets — real butterflies on the phlox and the lilacs never seem to give me headaches.

I have said that I do not regret the change in myself, that I would not, if I could, gather up the stores of information I once possessed and refurnish my brain with them, — no, not even if I could arrange them all in order, cleaned and dusted and sorted ready to be used or admired. Let them go! Some of them have already gone altogether, thrown away, dropped into cracks, burned up, ground into powder, dissolved into nothing. Some lie, perhaps, piled up in the dusty garrets of my brain, huddled together in formless heaps, or stowed close in the old chests of memory that are never opened. If I searched I might find them, and drag them out, and perhaps among them I might discover some treasures, but I shall never search. I shall let them all lie together in the quiet, dusty twilight, not to be disturbed until the whole mansion, from dim attic to sunlit living-rooms, shall perish to be known no more.

## Travelers' Letters

I AM not a traveling person, but many of my friends are, and as the season of the year arrives when they are saying good-bye and departing to the ends of the earth, I am depressed. Let no one misunderstand me. I am not depressed because of the good-byes. I love my friends, and it gives me a pang to see the gangplank pulled in, but after they are gone and I have taken up my placid way again, I am well content in a realization of their existence and their welfare. Nor is it the outward ceremonies, the pomp and circumstance of departure that I envy them. My small contributions to it — boxes of candy, baskets of oranges, modest pints of champagne — these I send cheerfully, nothing grudging, though I confess to regret when they miss fire, or are absorbed by the steward on the way.

Nor, lastly, do I envy them their travels. The ends of the earth to which they wend are, no doubt, pleasant; but my end is pleasant,

too, and I do not repine that my summer paths are the quiet, homely ones of old New England.

No, my depression arises from none of these things. It comes — I hesitate to confess the brutal truth — from the thought of the letters my Summer-in-Europe friends will write me. There! It is told!

And yet, I insist, I am really not a brute. I love my friends dearly, and when they go away to certain places — Maine, or the White Mountains, or Cape Cod — I love to get letters from them. But not when they go to Europe. There is something about Europe — and, I may add, California and all World's Fairs — that works mortal havoc with the friendly letter. I might almost say that so far as I am concerned a real, genuine friendly letter *from Europe* does not exist, unless the writer has settled down and lived in Europe until it has become home. Perhaps this is the real trouble. My friends galloping about the map are not at home. They are alert, beset with outward experiences to which they are giving continuous, restless response, and their letters are correspondingly rapid, restless, ex-

ternal, full of places and things and people, viewed rapidly and superficially; and all, no matter from whom, bear a strong family resemblance — they are travelers' letters. They reek of hotels and trains, they suggest monuments, museums — in a word — “sights.”

Now, I have no objection to “sights” as such, nor to hotels and trains and museums. Monuments, indeed, of all sorts, except the Pyramids, I do hold in execration, but I try not to be unpleasant about them, and it is only when these things are offered me as a substitute for friends that I protest.

I am not unreasonable. I do not expect all my friends to be brilliant letter writers. A dull letter from a dear friend is one of the commonest — and pleasantest — things in life. But I want to feel my friend, not Europe, at the other end of the letter. If she is at home, in her habitual courses, she writes me little, pleasant humdrum things about her life, gives me a glimpse of her moods, of her real welfare. She does this even, as I have said, if she is at Cape Cod, or down in Maine. But abroad she cannot do it — instead she tries to serve up Europe to me! And Europe I can do without,



at least Europe in just this form. Parts of it I, even I, have seen. And for the rest I am content to wait, or if, meanwhile, I grow impatient, and wish to learn more about Venice or Paris or the Tyrol, about this picture or that cathedral, I know several ways of finding out. From my friends abroad, all I ask is a friendly letter now and then, but, ah me! this is the very thing I never get! Why, it passes me to say. Is European travel a universal leveler, blotting out all individuality, an encouragement of the commonplace and the external? Is every one uninteresting away from home? I have sometimes thought so, as I have surveyed a steamerful of people or an automobile-load of tourists. And yet this does not seem wholly probable. At all events, though I cannot account for them, I am sure of my facts. Already I feel in anticipation the dreariness of those first letters that will come traveling back to me — letters written usually in pale ink or in pencil, on very thin paper, and usually cross-lined. Perhaps, now I think of it, this adds a last touch of exasperation to my feelings — this thin paper and bad ink. If they would only

use a good, thick, cream-white sheet and write half the amount, I should take it kindly, but I find it doubly irritating to spend an hour, in a good light, deciphering things that are entirely indifferent to me when read. It tries me, when I want to know from Beatrice whether Hero's hair is growing in curly or straight after her fever, to work painfully among cross-hatchings, only to discover that "we took the train at 5 P.M. and arrived at 7, in time for supper on the summit — the view was magnificent — wish you were with us!"

There are, of course, exceptions. One of my friends once spent a long summer in a tiny village in the Black Forest. She wrote comfortable, homey letters about nothing in particular, and I treasured them. But this exception only proves my point — she did not write traveling letters because she did not travel. Again, another friend once sent me a letter from Florence that was a gem. Pictures? Monasteries? Olive groves? No, none of these were remotely mentioned — thank fortune! Her letter was one long tirade against the habits of a certain group of foreigners —

I will not say of what nation — in regard to their use of the toothpick! She was in such a state of exasperation when she wrote it that she was absolutely herself. I felt as if she had sat beside me, temper and all, and I had heard and seen her talk. I did not care in the least about foreign manners, but oh, that was a good letter! Which again, I think, proves my point.

Yes, my summer letters are dreary affairs. And of late years my troubles are aggravated by that last insult to friendship, the “souvenir” post-card. At this point language fails me. I have no words in which to speak of this abomination. It symbolizes the triumph of the commonplace, of the cheap-and-easy, the utter capitulation of individuality. And they will pour in upon me — post-cards in black and white, post-cards in colors, post-cards of all the famous pictures, of all the cathedrals, views, mountains, hotels, donkeys, peasants, in all tourist-Europe, and occasionally, horror of horrors, comic post-cards! On their edges will be scrawled flying words, and some initials, and as I decipher them I can see the counter where the things were purchased —

the crowd of tourists choosing "sets," some for collections, some for poor absent friends like me; I can see them scribbling their messages, with ink and pen furnished by the provident shopkeeper, and then hurrying on to their trains or their boats or their trams. Souvenir post-cards indeed! To me who loathe the very name of souvenir! To me who so dearly love a quiet letter from a friend, written infrequently, perhaps, but in peace of spirit!

There seems to be no hope ahead. As the summers pass my trials of this sort grow greater rather than less. The letters grow more and more rapid, more and more restless, more and more external, and the post-cards pile up *ad nauseam*! I have never protested before, except in spirit. I can do so now only under the shelter of anonymity. If I criticize my friends it will pain them, and, I persist, I love my friends dearly. And so as the season comes round, I am depressed. Some summer I may even be driven to go to Europe myself!

## The Novelist's Choice

FOR a number of years, in my desultory novel-reading, I have found myself occasionally dropping into a particular line of speculation. As I re-read "The Mill on the Floss," for instance, I fall to wondering what kind of story it would have made if George Eliot had allowed Tom to tell it. He would have done it bluntly, honestly, without condoning his own faults and mistakes, we may be sure; but also, we may be equally sure, without condoning Maggie's. We should probably have been left in the dark as to the motiving of her acts. Stephen Guest would have fared rather badly, Philip Wakem even worse, and Mrs. Tulliver and Sister Glegg and Sister Pullet would hardly have come in as characters at all, since Tom had none of the special sort of humorous sense to which they appeal. Very likely Tom would have failed as signally to do justice to his own character as to Maggie's — his powers were not in the line of conscious self-portrayal.



The more I speculate about this, the more amused and interested I am. And when, after it, I come back to the real story, as it was actually written, I find myself keener to appreciate the things which I discover there — the embodied result of the novelist's choice to tell her story as she did, and not otherwise.

I have sometimes tried "Henry Esmond" in the same way. I fancy it told, for example, through the letters or the diary of Beatrix. What a stormy recital it would be! Fragmentary, capricious, concealing more than it revealed, for Beatrix would never have been what is called simply honest, even with herself. And yet, whatever she wrote, however she posed, whatever tricks of the spirit she perpetrated, I fancy we could have guessed at her story and her nature in spite of herself. The more one thinks of it, the more one longs for a chance to try, anyhow — to have at those letters or that diary. And then one remembers, — to be sure! there are no letters, there is no diary; we were only supposing. What a pity! Yet could we, for their sakes, give up the story as it is?

Or, again, imagine the story told in the modern, dramatic way: not by any character acting as narrator, not by the author as author, not by anybody self-confessed, but allowed to enact itself upon the pages of the book as upon a stage — a few stage-directions supplied in place of scenery and real action, each participant speaking in turn, and the reader left to orient himself as he can. Fancy the beginning: —

“My name is Henry Esmond.”

“His name is Henry Esmond, sure enough,” said Mrs. Worksop.

“So this is the little priest,” said Lord Castlewood. “Welcome, kinsman.”

“He is saying his prayers to Mamma!” said little Beatrix.

But no, don't fancy it! Let us stop right here, and go back to those leisurely and deliberate first chapters as they now stand. Already one feels a little ashamed of having allowed one's self to lay such unhallowed hands upon the tale, and one determines to cease experimenting, at least upon Henry Esmond, and leave him to the undisputed possession of his grave, decorous, and alto-

gether delightful narrative. And yet, this habit of speculation once formed, one is tempted ever afresh to its indulgence — tempted often at the most unexpected point: as I read over the pretty drama of “Romeo and Juliet,” I am by some freak of the mind led to wonder what their story would sound like, told by Juliet’s nurse.

It seems curious that writers themselves have not experimented in this way with their own material. Browning, indeed, the king of experimenters, did it once. But, except “The Ring and the Book,” I do not think of anything of the kind. And “The Ring and the Book” is so much more than a study in storytelling that it is as well to leave it with this passing mention.

Obviously, it makes a difference, this choice of the novelist. It is, of course, only one of the things that go to determining what a novel will be like, but it is surely one. Thackeray is always Thackeray, whether he chooses to tell his tale through the mouth of one of his characters or to step forward in his own person and talk frankly about his people as they pass before him. He is still Thackeray, yet

there is a vast difference between the atmosphere of "Esmond," which gives us the peaceful and deliberate reminiscences of an old man, and the atmosphere of "Vanity Fair," where the author is avowedly himself, like a showman with his puppets. Perhaps it was the choice of the novelist that produced the difference, perhaps it was something inherent in the two tales, as he regarded them, that led to the choice. At all events, the choice itself is worth thinking of.

The expedient of putting a story into the mouth of one of the actors in it — that is, the autobiographical method — has great antiquity, being at least as old as the *Odyssey*. Vernon Lee, in an interesting if whimsical essay of hers on "Literary Construction," maintains that it is essentially an expedient of immaturity. "I have no doubt," she says, "that most of the stories which we have all written between the ages of fifteen and twenty were either in the autobiographical or the epistolary form . . . and altogether reproduced, in their immaturity, the forms of an immature period of novel-writing, just as Darwinism tells us that the feet and legs of

babies reproduce the feet and legs of monkeys. For, difficult as it is to realize, the apparently simplest form of construction is by far the most difficult; and the straightforward narrative of men and women's feelings and passions, of anything save their merest outward acts — the narrative which makes the thing pass naturally before the reader's mind — is by far the most difficult, as it is the most perfect."

Stevenson, whose powers as a story-teller can hardly be called immature, yet averred that it was the easiest way. He writes to Edmund Gosse, "Yes, honestly, fiction is very difficult. . . . And the difficulty of according the narrative and the dialogue (in a work in the third person) is extreme. That is one reason out of half a dozen why I so often prefer the first."

Evidently here he was thinking more of style than of construction, and one would like to know the rest of the half dozen reasons why he preferred the first person for his stories. Perhaps we can guess at some of them. For the autobiographical form seems to settle a good many other matters besides this one



of literary pitch. It prescribes in many ways the point of view. The general attitude of the actor-narrator toward the chain of events which he relates, is predetermined by his own part in those events.

But probably the strongest justification for the form is that it carries with it a certain air of genuineness. A man's own story has a value as such, as the newspaper interview testifies every day. It imposes upon us, in spite of ourselves, a prepossession in favor of its truth. Now, whatever else the novelist may wish to do, he always, first of all, wishes to create in his readers this illusion of reality. He wants to have his story seem true. He knows, indeed, that it is not true. We know it is not true. He knows that we know. And yet, he will spend months in dull research for the sake of supplying his tale with certain small earmarks of veracity that may, perchance, trick the public into a moment of doubt. He will furnish forth his story with elaborate introductions and appendices, accounting for his own share, and the publisher's share, in it, with the hope that he may be able to persuade us, at least for half an

hour, that he, the author, is really and truly only the "interested friend" to whom the papers were left; that he has really been only the recipient of a dying confession, only the discoverer of a long-hidden diary. And if he succeeds, what triumph! Is there any one who would be proof against the flattery implied in such inquiries as were aroused by "Nancy Stair" as to the real genealogy of the Stair family?

To this endeavor to make his story seem like the narrative of actual occurrences the novelist has been partly driven by the attitude of his readers. "Convincing" is the critic's word now — a novel must be "convincing." The word is modern, the attitude which it connotes is modern. Not that readers of old did not find pleasure in giving themselves up to the story-teller. But they gave themselves up more easily than readers do now. The old story-teller began his tale smoothly enough: "There was once a beautiful girl, who had a cruel step-mother and two wicked step-sisters." Very good. His listeners, with a habit of acquiescence, accepted at once the beauty of the heroine, the cruelty

and wickedness of the others. For them the tale was sufficiently convincing. Even the fairy godmother passed unchallenged. Who knew that fairy godmothers might not exist somewhere?

But we have lost the habit of acquiescence. We are proving all things, and we hold fast to very little. We challenge, we scrutinize, we dissect. We have opinions about the limits of the possible, the probable, and the inevitable. And nothing really satisfies us but the inevitable.

To make his tale seem inevitable, then, is the author's ambition, and he is aware that if he is to do this he cannot get to work in the old manner. If he begins, "There was once a beautiful girl, with a cruel step-mother and two wicked —" "Ah, wait!" says his reader, "this will never do. Cruelty and wickedness are easy words to say, but the things themselves are not to be thus lightly denominated. One must discriminate. How about the step-mother's point of view? In just what way was she cruel? How did she become so? How do you know she existed at all? She does not seem to us a very real person. She is not con-

vincing. I don't think I care to finish this story."

The modern story-teller cannot help being conscious of this attitude on the part of his readers. Probably he has it himself, to some extent, toward his own material. What wonder, then, if, aware of the effectiveness of the expedient, he passes his story over to one of his characters, and loads upon his shoulders the burden of making it "convincing."

This seems, on the face of it, an easy way out. It shifts responsibility from the author to the hero, or whoever it is who is telling the story. "How do I know? I know because I was there. She was *my* step-mother." It is the old reply of Æneas to Dido: "Quorum pars magna fui."

And not merely an easy way out, but often an excellent way. We have only to run over a few titles, to realize the possibilities of the autobiography as a literary form: "Henry Esmond," "Robinson Crusoe," "Lorna Doone," "Jane Eyre," "Kidnapped," "David Balfour," "Peter Ibbetson," "Harry Richmond," "Joseph Vance," — good books, indeed!

With such a list before us, it may seem presumptuous to hint that the autobiographical form has its limitations and its drawbacks. Yet I believe it has. For, first, there is a danger in it arising from a fact inherent in human nature: the fact that heroes and minstrels are not usually made of the same stuff. One does things, the other tells about them. The person whom adventures befall is not necessarily the one who is best able to relate them. It is not always so, of course. There are rare beings who are born with the hero and the minstrel soul bound together within them — the Odysseus and the Æneas souls. For them it is very well. It was well for Odysseus, in the hall of the Phæacians, and for Æneas, in the court of Dido, to tell their adventures. They were doubly gifted, for action and for expression. But what if Achilles had tried to tell his story? Or Ajax his? Poor, inarticulate Ajax! There was plenty to tell, but what a botch he would have made of it! He is better off, he and Achilles too, in the hands of Homer.

The race of the inarticulate has not yet died out. It never will. But we would not



wish to miss the telling of their stories because it must be done by other lips than theirs. The story of Quasimodo, the story of Tess, the story of Dorothea Brooke, the story of Clara Middleton, the story of Isabel Archer, these are all, for various reasons, stories which could never have come from the characters themselves. Some of them, perhaps, could have told, but never would have done so. Others would, perhaps, but never could. Most of them probably neither would nor could. And we are glad, when we think about them, that their authors did not force them to the confessional against their natures.

Authors are not always so considerate. I have read autobiographical novels where the pleasure of the story was continually clouded by a feeling of protest that it should have been told thus. David Balfour, in certain parts of it, gives me this feeling. When he is telling his adventures it is well enough, though even there I should sometimes be glad if the story could have been told quite directly and simply by the author. I should like to know how David looked now and then, as well as what he did. And, of course, David was not

the kind of fellow who would ever know how he looked; still less could he ever have written it down as part of an account of his life. But when it comes to his love affairs, and I find him writing these down in some detail, I must protest, "Oh, David! You know you never would have told that!" And then I find myself suddenly regarding David with suspicion. I long to step into the story and pull his hair and see if it is not, after all, only a wig — to pull his nose, and see if the mask does n't come off, disclosing, not David at all, but David's author, Stevenson.

Ah, there is the danger! The story must be told, the secrets must be laid bare — secrets guarded not by big keys and heavy boulders of rock, but by the walls of impenetrable reserve in our own human nature. If they are not told, we are baffled and disappointed. If they are told, we are critical. It is a dilemma.

Sometimes, indeed, the problem is successfully met. In "Lorna Doone," for example, John Ridd, — plain John Ridd, — telling his own love story, manages to steer along the narrow channel between too much reserve

and too little. He loves Lorna, he is not ashamed to confess that to all the world, but as to what he says to Lorna about it, or what she says to him, this is a matter which in his opinion is nobody's business but his and hers. And one can almost see the shy, yet humorous half-smile and heightened color with which he backs away from a love scene and cannily edges round it, to take up the narrative again further on. One could wish that David Balfour had learned a lesson of John.

Moreover, as I have already suggested in the case of David, the autobiographical form is unsatisfactory in another way. If, on the one hand, it gives us too much of the hero-autobiographer's private soul, so that we pray for a little decent reserve, on the other hand, it often gives us too little of his public face, too little of the commonplace externals of his personality. And here again the trouble arises from certain universal facts of human experience. For we are accustomed to get at people from the outside. We look at their faces, we watch them walk, we listen to their voices, we notice what clothes they wear and how

they wear them, we regard them in their goings-out and their comings-in, and after a while we arrive, or think we arrive, at a certain intimacy with what we call their souls. We say we know them. Perhaps we do, and perhaps we don't, but at any rate, such knowledge as we have is reached in this way. It is the way we are accustomed to; we know how to value and allow for its data, how to discount its deceptions — perhaps we even like its baffling reserves.

Now, in the autobiographical novel, all this is reversed: instead of approaching the hero from the outside, we approach him from the inside. Instead of looking into his eyes, we look out of them. In a sense, doubtless, we know him better than if we had approached him through the ordinary channels, but in another sense we do not know him so well. It is too much like the way we know — or rather the way we fail to know — ourselves. And so, in the autobiographical novel one sometimes grows a little tired of looking from within, out. One longs to stand off and get a good plain view of the hero's nose, and his eyes. One wants to see him walk down the

street, instead of walking down the street inside him.

Authors realize this, at least by flashes, and they try to gratify us, sometimes in very amusing ways. Here is Marcelle Tinayre, for example, in "Hellé," which is the autobiography of a young girl. She is beautiful, — she manages to imply that without involving herself in any breach of decorum, — but she must in some way be described more fully. So the author makes her stand before a mirror in her ball-gown and set down what she sees there. The ruse is obvious. The action, which would have been natural — indeed inevitable — for a person like Marie Bashkirtseff, is for Hellé entirely out of character. But what would you have? The reader must be told what she looked like.

On the other hand, such an expedient is sometimes entirely successful. There is a scene in "Jane Eyre," where Jane, in a frenzy of mingled jealousy and self-martyrdom, sets herself down before her mirror and paints with remorseless fidelity her own plain face, then paints from memory a portrait of the beautiful lady whom she imagines to be her



rival in the affections of Rochester. The action is perfectly natural. I believe Jane was always looking in the glass, not because she admired herself, but because she did not. And this pricking consciousness of her own appearance pervades the whole narrative, so that one has in its perusal very little of this sense that I have been speaking of, of viewing the hero entirely from within.

This could be achieved in the fictitious autobiography of Jane, just as it was in the real autobiography of Marie Bashkirtseff; but there are types of women with whom it could not be done — women like Dorothea Brooke or Clara Middleton. Clara, struggling hopeless in the net of circumstance, yet flashing keen lights on the people about her, could never turn such light on herself. She was unaware of her own physical loveliness, — her walk, her hair as it curled about her ears and neck. Call such things trifling and external if you will, yet it is through such trifling externals that some of our deepest and most instinctive impressions arise.

But if self-portraiture is not natural to all women, still less is it so to most men. In

Locke's "Simon the Jester," for example, we find our hero writing thus: "I looked at him and smiled, perhaps a little wearily. One can always command one's eyes, but one's lips get sometimes out of control. He could not have noticed my lips, however." Instantly we detect the note of falseness here. Such a man would not have carefully written down the fact that he smiled wearily, and that his friend did not notice his lips. Oscar Wilde would have been aware of such a fact about himself, and when in "Dorian Grey" he makes his hero run to the mirror to catch his own expression before it fades, we do not challenge it, though we may perhaps question whether Dorian Grey was worth writing about at all. But we do not expect such things from Simon de Gex — we do not expect such things from most men. Of course the fact was, that the author of Simon wanted us to know that Simon's smile was a weary one, and no way of making this clear occurred to him, except that of having Simon himself admit that he smiled wearily. This little passage is not a momentary slip. It is typical of the whole book, which might be used as an illustration

of the way in which an unfortunate method of telling the story acts as a handicap from beginning to end. With a rather unusual and very interesting situation to set forth, the author has thrown away his chance of making it seem "inevitable" by setting up at the start a postulate in which we can never acquiesce — the postulate of Simon de Gex writing himself up.

Clearly, description of the hero by himself is dangerous tactics. Yet, where it is not attempted, we miss it. The weakness of the latter part of De Morgan's "Joseph Vance" is, I believe, due not entirely to the fact that his father died out of the story, but also, among other things, to the fact that Joseph himself, being grown-up, could no longer regard himself impersonally enough to make his personality vivid to us. And readers of the book, if they are at all like me, carry away from it a vivid picture of Joseph Vance the boy, but a very pale picture of Joseph Vance the man.

It is, perhaps, the endeavor to escape from some of these pitfalls that beset the autobiographical form, and yet to profit by its

opportunities, which leads writers to try another expedient — that is, to let the story be told, not by the hero, but by the hero's friend. "The Belovèd Vagabond" is done in this way, and very cleverly done. Clearly, it could never have been told by the Vagabond himself. An outside view of him was indispensable. He could never, without stepping entirely out of his own character, have set forth, or even dimly suggested, the portrait of himself, of his whole whimsical, lovable personality, as it is set forth by his young friend and protégé, the street waif, little Asticot.

The objection to this method is, that the teller of the story, not having the hero's decisive influence on the action, is apt to fade into a nonentity, a shadowy person, so that one scarcely remembers him. In "The Belovèd Vagabond" this is not true of the first part of the book. There, as in "Joseph Vance," the narrator is looking back upon his own childhood. But as little Asticot grows up, and becomes the narrator of his patron's story, he himself recedes, we have no clear picture of him.

Similarly in "The Newcomes," the narrator-friend keeps himself so entirely in the background that I fancy many of us have not realized at all that the story is actually told by one of the characters, and not by Thackeray himself. And I think we may all admit that in this volume *Pendennis*, considered simply as the narrator of the Newcomes' history, is very close to a nonentity.

But if a nonentity, why there at all? If the actor-narrator pales to a mere literary convention, what is there to gain by keeping him?

Very little to gain, and something to lose. For, whether hero or hero's friend, the teller of the story, once committed to his task of accounting for himself, and for his possession of all the facts of the narrative, cannot lay it down. He must keep on accounting for himself. Every time he narrates an event of which he was not himself an eye-witness, he must explain how he found out about it. If he fails to do this satisfactorily, the entire fabric of probability so carefully built up by the author topples and falls. How does little Asticot know that the English lady is his



master's old love? How does he know there was an old love at all? He must account for it — and does. He saw some old letters, some verses, he put two and two together. We are satisfied this time, but the question may arise again, and we shall need to be satisfied again.

Pendennis, conscious of this necessity of accounting for his information, was not so inclined to meet it in this way. He was aware that he could never follow the rules of the game if he interpreted them too strictly, and so made a sort of general confession, a blanket apology, which is worth quoting at length because it so clearly sets forth the difficulties which beset the actor-narrator: —

“In the present volumes, where dialogues are written down which the reporter could by no possibility have heard, and where motives are detected which the persons actuated by them certainly never confided to the writer, the public must, once for all, be warned that the author's individual fancy very likely supplies much of the narrative; and that he forms it as best he may, out of stray papers, conversations reported to him, and his knowl-

edge, right or wrong, of the characters of the persons engaged. And, as is the case with the most orthodox histories, the writer's own guesses or conjectures are printed in exactly the same type as the most ascertained patent facts. I fancy, for my part, that the speeches attributed to Clive, the Colonel, and the rest are as authentic as the orations in Sallust or Livy, and only implore the truth-loving public to believe that incidents here told, and which passed very probably without witnesses, were either confided to me subsequently as compiler of this biography, or are of such a nature that they must have happened from what we know happened after. For example, when you read such words as 'que Romanus' on a battered Roman stone, your profound antiquarian knowledge enables you to assert that 'Senatus Populus' was also inscribed there at some time or other. . . . You tell your tales as you can, and state the facts as you think they must have been. In this manner Mr. James, Titus Livius, Sheriff Alison, Robinson Crusoe, and all historians proceeded. Blunders there must be in the best of these narratives, and more

asserted than they can possibly know or vouch for."

There are very few heroes, or hero's friends, who have taken such liberties, but then few have told so good a story as "The Newcomes." I fancy we are ready to grant Mr. Pendennis all the privileges he demands, yet I cannot help feeling that Thackeray set him rather too hard a task — a task which, indeed, he might better have assumed himself. In fact, I have this feeling about many of the novels cast in the autobiographical form. They may be good stories as they are, but they might, I suspect, have been just a little better if the author had not limited his own powers by bundling himself up in the clothes and the mask and the wig of one of the characters. I do not feel this about all such novels. Some of them seem to me just right as they are, and after any number of experiments with them — fancying them re-written in this way and that — I come back to the author's choice as the best. This is the case with "Lorna Doone" and "Henry Esmond" and "Jane Eyre" and "Kidnapped" and "Treasure Island" and "Joseph Vance."

It seems like a curious company of books to be named in one sentence. Yet, after all, they are of only two kinds: stories of inner experience, told by an introspective hero; and stories of adventure, told by a hero of naïve temperament with a clear grip on the practical in life. That is, in each case, the hero is fitted to his task. John Ridd could not have written Esmond's story nor Esmond John Ridd's, but John Ridd was perfectly capable of writing his own, and Esmond his. Jane Eyre's story, told by any one but herself, would lose something of its value. Told by herself, it is wonderfully impressive as a human document. The life she portrays could not, perhaps, have been what she saw it, but this is how she actually did see it. There never was a man like Mr. Rochester, perhaps. But nobody cares about that. What we are concerned with is her idea of Mr. Rochester. And we are convinced that there was a woman who felt about a man what she felt about Mr. Rochester. The whole book is, in fact, lyric.

It is the record of a temperament buffeted about by the impact of people and circum-

stance, which are viewed only as they affect this temperament. Whether you like that kind of temperament or not is another matter. Given the subject, the book rings true, and the lyric form was undoubtedly the best for it.

In his search for the "inevitable," then, the writer has, after all, nothing to gain by resorting to the expedient of the actor-narrator, unless this actor-narrator is himself inevitable, — unless his part as teller of the story fits him so perfectly as to require no apology. This will hardly be the case except with a very limited class of adventure stories, and with a larger class of stories which are the records of an introspective nature. With these exceptions, he usually does better if he works with free hands, — if, taking as his own the apology of Pendennis, he quietly supplies the missing words of the inscription, tells his tales as he can, and states the facts as he thinks they must have been. And if his understanding of life be deep enough, he will create in us the illusion of reality just as surely as if he had sought to establish it by letters and diaries.



Even when freed from a certain kind of accountability, he need not necessarily take any more liberties with his characters than the hero would have done. "Pride and Prejudice," for example, is told almost as Elizabeth would have told it herself if she had written it. Hardly any information is given but what she knew, and Darcy's character is not fully cleared up until it is cleared in her eyes. In the "Three Musketeers" the story is told as D'Artagnan might have told it. What is a mystery to him remains a mystery to the reader. His estimate of the other characters dominates the story. Yet, not being told by him, but by an irresponsible author, the tale is carried on with a lightness and freedom that D'Artagnan himself, writing in character, could hardly have achieved. Howells, in "The Rise of Silas Lapham," tells the story from the standpoint of Mr. Lapham, or, now and then, from that of Mrs. Lapham. We are allowed to follow, to some extent, the workings of their minds, but their two daughters are treated externally. As we follow their fortunes and try to predict the outcome, we have little more to go upon

than their parents had. This is Howells's usual method, and it is the method of much modern writing.

Mr. James, in "The Other House," carries the external point of view to such an extreme that at the end of the book, when the evidence is all in, there is still room for question, among intelligent people, as to what really happened; and even more room for disagreement as to what the motives of the characters were. Mr. James also furnishes us the best example I can think of, of the other extreme, where the treatment is exclusively internal. In a curious piece of writing, "In the Cage," which I cannot help thinking was a bit of pure experimenting, he attempts to set forth the spiritual states of a girl telegrapher — states of which she herself was only dimly aware, impulses which never reached consciousness, feelings which she never more than half confessed, even to herself.

Between these two extremes most of the best story-telling is done. Authors do not often openly assume omniscience: they treat their material from the standpoint of an impartial witness. Yet, when omniscience is

needed to explain character and interpret motive, —

“ All that the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb, — ”

it is assumed without apology, and the reader grants it without demur. If we think of parts of “Vanity Fair” and “Middlemarch” and “The Mill on the Floss,” of “Richard Feverel” and “The Portrait of a Lady,” of “Somehow Good” and “Tess,” and many others, we realize what we should be giving up if writers had tied themselves down to the autobiographical form. The more one thinks of it, the more one feels sure that, tempting as it is, its restrictions outweigh its opportunities.

And yet — one comes back to “Henry Esmond,” and one remembers “Joseph Vance,” and one cannot be satisfied to end the matter in a hard judgment like that. For there is a certain quality in these stories which endears them to us in a peculiar way, and which, I believe, is specially fostered by the autobiographical form in which they are cast. There is a certain type of story with this quality

potentially inherent in it, which no other manner of telling could so well bring out. It is a story like "Henry Esmond," the story of a long life, told as by one who has lived it, while he rests, near its end, and looks back.

The love of reminiscence is deep-rooted in us. We do not need to have length of years in order to possess it. All we need to have is a consciousness of the past as past. Some years ago, a little friend of mine, then four years old, attained a new phrase: "Don't you remember?" I say "attained," because it was evident that she had not only enlarged her field of expression by a new word, but that she had enlarged her field of experience by a new sensation, — the sensation of reminiscence. For the phrase, "Don't you remember?" always ushered in a story out of her small past, some event of the preceding winter or summer, some glimpse of history in which she had been actor or witness. It was always uttered with shining eyes and a flush of delight, which deepened if I was able to catch her reminiscence and recognize and enjoy it with her. Yet the things remembered were very simple, — a drive, a walk, a kitten,

a child watering his garden or falling down. The pleasure came, clearly, not from the original quality of the experience, but from the very act of remembering. She was tasting the pure pleasure of reminiscence. Watching her, I fell to wondering what was the precious quality of this pleasure whose flavor she was beginning to taste.

The charm of memory lies, I think, in the quality which it gives things, at once of intimacy and remoteness. The fascination to us of recalling our past selves, our former surroundings, lies in our sense that they are absolutely known to us, yet absolutely out of our reach. We can recall places, houses, rooms, until every detail lives again. We can turn from one thing to another and, as we look at each, lo, it is there! It has a reality more poignant than the hand that we touch or the flower that we smell. Sometimes, it is true, present experiences, even as they occur, have something of this quality. They do not need to recede into the past to gain this glamour. Certain places have it: cathedrals sometimes, and still lakes. Certain things foster it: firelight, and silence, and the steady fall of rain.



Certain moments give birth to it: the luminous pause between sundown and dusk, afternoon with its slant of light through deep grass or across a quiet river. This, I fancy, was what Tennyson was thinking of when he called the lotus land the land "wherein it seemed always afternoon." In that land these magic moments were prolonged, and thus it became the land of reminiscence.

My little friend was a thought too young, perhaps, to have entered into this land. It is a place where we do not expect to meet many children. Girls in their twenties sometimes slip in, when they have time, and boys in their teens, and then again, — well, perhaps, boys in their fifties. Indeed the forties and fifties are the usual time for a first real sojourn in these pleasant meadows. One looks over the hedge, or slips through a gap, half by accident, and finding it fair within, one comes back. And again one comes back, and each time one stays longer and wanders farther. And as one grows to know it better, one discovers that there is more than a meadow beyond the hedge. There are many meadows, and great woods and rivers and cities. And

the delight of it is, that everything there is like something one has seen before, only lovelier. For, just as still water interprets and recreates the life it reflects, so in the land of memory life is rendered again with a tenderness that is a most precious kind of truth.

It is not to every one, nor to any one at all times, that the mood of reminiscence comes in its perfection. Often its rarer pleasures are obscured by a pain that is no necessary part of its quality, oftener they are never given the chance to reveal themselves. They require for their enjoyment a contemplative spirit, a soul at leisure, that the waters of memory may be still and clear, mirroring the images of things now plainly, line for line, now blurred and softened by light winds of oblivion that make the vision all the more lovely.

But this is not a contemplative age, nor is leisure of spirit its chief characteristic. There is little encouragement given to the reminiscent mood, either in literature or in life. Literary endeavor is in the direction of conciseness and swiftness. Its motto is Stevenson's: "War to the adjective! Death to the optic nerve!"

This is very good. But there is another kind of thing that is good, too: the kind of thing that comes with the brooding vision, with the remoteness that permits a broader focus and a greater deliberateness of treatment, that finds expression in abundance of delicately-wrought detail. This it is which, for lack of a better name, I am calling the reminiscent manner. One meets it in some poetry, and now and then in such prose as Richard Jefferies's. Its most complete and exquisite embodiment is surely in that rare and perfect prose lyric, Walter Pater's "Child in the House." One might expect to find it most of all in the real autobiography, since this is the avowed form of reminiscence. But they are disappointing, these genuine autobiographers. For one thing, they are hampered by their facts. Stevenson was quite right when he said that a finished biography was "not nearly so finished as quite a rotten novel"; and not only in finish but in other ways it is at a disadvantage compared with fiction. Sometimes its writers may have mistaken notions of their obligation to suppress their own personalities; they must always have instincts of re-

serve which we cannot fail to understand. At all events, they do not wander in the fields of reminiscence with the free step and the joyous abandon that we could desire. Yet, even so, the rule holds that we have noticed with regard to novels: the chapters dealing with their "early years" often possess a charm that is lacking in the rest of the narrative. For there is a power in the long backward look that inevitably transfigures.

And so it is often to the make-believe autobiographies that we turn for something that is in its essence not make-believe at all, but a reality of experience. The satisfaction that they give is not of a kind to be justified or made clear by reading sample passages. It is born of the writer's attitude, which through intimacy with him we come to share. Merely to think of "Henry Esmond" is often enough to throw one into a mood of contemplative reminiscence. A lover of "Joseph Vance" has but to open the book anywhere for a moment and the color of his thought is changed — he is captured by this charm of the long backward look and the brooding vision. And if through the magic of the mood we are floated

a little aside from the remorseless current of immediate living, yet the realities which we thus come to feel are indeed realities, whose recognition we deeply crave, and to whose expression in literature we give eager and loving welcome.



## The Literary Uses of Experience

“DID you enjoy it very much?” asked a lady of a little girl whom she met coming away from an entertainment. “Yes,” answered the child, but there was a note of reservation in her voice. Then she threw back her head half defiantly and added, “But don’t you think it’s hard that I can never go to anything without having to go home and write an account of it afterwards?” Hard, indeed! And yet harder that the tyrant who imposed the requirement happened to be the child’s mother — one of those overtrained and overanxious people who continue to bring the higher education of women into disrepute. Of course, our sympathies are all with the little girl. We recognize that her protest was a sign, not of naughtiness, but of health. There was something wrong about this continual exploiting of immediate experience, and she knew it and rebelled against it. The little incident has lain in my mind for years, serving as a nucleus round which ruminating thoughts have gath-

ered regarding the whole subject of the literary uses of experience.

The writer of fiction, if he is at once sensitive and conscientious, must often find himself in a dilemma. He is urged to "write out of his own experience," since otherwise his work will not ring true. Look at Jane Austen, he is told, sitting quiet and feminine under her lamp and writing her tales of the little everyday doings of little everyday folk! Behold her, even refusing to undertake the great historical romance urged upon her by Royalty itself, because it "fell outside her experience." Here is a model for all young writers. Very well. The obedient artist turns him to the life about him, and, sure enough, there is indeed plenty of material. Here is an aunt who, considered as a "character," is ripe to be picked and set in a book. Here is a sister-in-law, whose experiences with her servants, literally set down, would make a most readable and instructive set of papers for some woman's journal. Or, in sterner vein, here is a brother or a friend whose business experience or whose love-affair offers a tempting subject. Finally, the writer realizes that in his own life he has only

to put forth his hand and take what he needs. Yes, for once the general voice is speaking the truth: his material does, indeed, lie close about him.

Suppose, then, he takes it, uses it. We know very well what happens: "Have you read that last thing by young Bellerophon? The one about the Lady and the Cook? Of course we all know who it is he means — she simply can't keep a cook — it's the scandal of the street, the number she has in a month. But I don't think that gives him any right — you know what I mean?" If it is his own experience he has used, the results are different, but no better: "You saw that story of his? Yes — it *is* interesting. I suppose you knew it was his own experience — yes, he went all through that a few years ago — oh, he's all right now, but his family felt terribly at the time, and I could n't help wondering how they'd like to see it all — sort of spread out in print this way."

Has it then always been so? Did Euripides's contemporaries look askance at him because, under the thin disguise of Clytemnestra, he had written up a sister-in-law? Did

those who listened to Sappho's lyrics shudder a little and murmur, "Beautiful, of course, but — how could she?" Did Horace's acquaintance raise their eyebrows over some of the personalities in the odes? And did Catullus's pretty little lady wish he had not coined her and her pet bird into verse? We cannot tell. Time has wiped out the original material, whatever it was, and left only the artistic rendering.

About our contemporaries, however, one hears persistent rumors: here is one composing a poem on his son's death even before the burial, and handing it to a friend for possible publication. Here is another using the love-affairs of his friends — quite recognizably — to make his plots. Here is another setting one of our centers of social service aflame with indignation because she had, in their opinion, written them up. Here is a New England town boiling over with resentment because one to whom they had shown hospitality had rewarded them by "putting them into a book." I saw recently a newspaper notice of a suit brought by a man against his wife because, as he alleged, her latest novel made use

of their life together in such a way as to reflect unpleasantly on his character.

Whether in these and other cases the complainants are justified, it is neither possible nor necessary to consider. The moral question involved in the use of real life is so complex that each instance would have to be handled separately. It was once, they say, decided that a man might sniff the odors of another man's dinner without having to pay for it, but whether he may bottle the aroma of another man's life while it is yet hot, for the purpose of serving it again, perhaps cold or lukewarm, to the general public, is quite another matter. It is at least clear that the use of experience may be fraught with perplexity for the writer. There is a curiously frank acknowledgment of this in a short story by Mrs. Wharton, called "Copy." It represents two authors, a man and a woman, who had once been in love with each other, meeting after the lapse of years. Each has the other's old love-letters, and each suddenly realizes what wonderful "copy" these would make. There is much skillful and intricate fencing between them, but at last, moved by a scarcely ac-



knowledgeed reverence for the past, by some obscure impulse of loyalty to it, they burn all the letters. The story may serve as a reminder that, whereas we are apt to know the cases where writers have yielded to temptation, — if temptation it be, — we do not know the cases where they have resisted.

But such recognition by authors themselves of the moral problems involved seems to be rather rare. In general, though readers may question or condemn, the writer himself is likely to be unconscious of offense. I met an instance of this once when I was thrown for a short time with a writer of stories. She had told me a good deal about her life at a certain period several years before, and among other matters had mentioned a teapot of delicate workmanship, and how it happened to get broken. Later, reading her newest book, I came upon the incident of the teapot. As I went on, I noticed other correspondences with what I knew to be fact. I was interested, and one day I brought the thing up. "It gives a good deal of your life in Rouen that winter, does n't it?" I said, innocent of offense. Instantly her color flamed and her eyes showed

deep annoyance. She took me up quickly: "It has nothing whatever to do with my life there. How could you have supposed that?" Naturally, I dropped the matter, but, that being my first close encounter with the artistic temperament, I was very much puzzled. There was no doubting her sincerity, but there was also no doubting the fact that her life of that winter had got into her book.

Again, a young girl, just out of college, wrote her first novel. Her college friends read it with consternation. "But," they exclaimed, "this is Anna herself! This is Anna's step-mother! This is just what did happen that time when her father died! This is not a novel, it is a diary! Anna is going too far." But two years later Anna wrote another novel, containing more shocks for her friends. Here, they claimed, was Anna's engagement and marriage. Here was Anna's husband. Here were her experiences at the birth of her child. They approached her about it. What satisfaction did they get? Just as little as I got in the teapot incident. Anna absolutely denied any connection between her novel and her own life, and Anna was truth itself. At the

same time, Anna, speaking as an artist, *ex cathedra*, said firmly, that if anything in her life *should* be needed for the artistic completeness of her literary work, she would not hesitate to use it, art being in a realm so much higher than one's personal feelings.

From all this, it is obvious enough that something happens to the artist, while he is artist, which imposes on him standards different from ours — different even from his own when he is not in the artistic mood. So that although as ordinary man in ordinary intercourse he may, for example, be a most reserved person, who would find it easier to cut out his own heart and slice it up for his friends than to cull out bits of his deepest life and serve them up in conversation, yet on the printed page we may find him doing something very much like this — exploiting in luminous paragraphs moods and feelings which to most of us seem too deep-lying to be touched upon, save by allusive implication, even with our most beloved friends. I have read articles in the magazines that made me uncomfortable, not because they were shocking on the few lines along which one is conventionally sup-

posed to be shocked, but because they seemed to me to involve such crude exposure of the soul as nothing but hysteria could excuse. A friend of mine, trying to read a certain essay — if one may apply the term to a ten-page prose lyric expressing the author's personal mood — suddenly threw it down, exclaiming, "This is too painful — it's raw! It's bleeding!" At first glance, one is inclined to put such writers in the class with a certain little girl I knew, who climbed up into her mother's lap and said, with more than a suggestion of gloating anticipation, "Now, mother, let's talk about my faults!" But is it perhaps we who are wrong? Is our vaunted New England reserve, after all, at fault? Are these writers showing us the way, and is there in the future to be no reserve in life as there is, apparently, for them, none in art? Or are we trying to reconcile two different worlds when we allow ourselves to be troubled by the artist's intimacy of revelation? Are we shrinking from the spiritual nude in art as some people still shrink from the physical nude, merely because our artistic perceptions have been incompletely developed?



These are questions which I am better prepared to ask than to answer, yet a sidelight on them has seemed to come through my meditations on memory. For years it has beset me, this thought of the magic possessed by memory. Where it touches it transforms. Nearly everybody's memory is artistic, or at any rate more nearly artistic than his immediate perceptions. Children are following a true instinct when they beg for a story "about something you remember, that happened a long time ago," for the things that we thus remember have a way of gathering into themselves any flavor of poetic feeling that may be in our nature. What is it, then, that memory does?

For one thing, it selects. In our immediate perceptions we often cannot see the woods for the trees. Memory knows no such trouble. Its trees are often blurred, but its woods stretch far and blue, dark-shadowed and full of meanings. For another, it distances. Through it we escape from the importunity of practical issues. Memory knows no practical issues; things are clear but we cannot alter them, they are real but we can



neither seize nor avoid them. The light of memory is a light that never was on sea or land — mellow and soft, full of tender interpretations, of delicate emphases, of exquisite withdrawals.

If memory, then, is a kind of art, art is a kind of memory. Like memory it selects, like memory it interprets. It, too, has its emphases and its withdrawals, and like memory it creates its own remoteness. For to see beauty, or, more broadly, to see the world with our perceptions alert to its æsthetic significance, we must withdraw from it, we must hold it away from us. While we are seeing the beauty of the lion who crouches in the jungle grass, we do, in that instant of perception, ignore the necessity for killing him, the danger of his killing us. Wandering in a white sea-fog over the marshes, we may, in a realization of its weird loveliness, entirely lose our sense of the menace it holds for us. These things take upon themselves, for the moment, something of the quality of memories. Was it, as Gilbert Murray suggests, an acknowledgment of this kinship between memory and art, that the Greeks wove into the fiber of their philo-

sophic myth, when they made Memory the mother of the Muses?

But the relation is one of kinship only, not of identity. For whereas the remoteness of memory is unalterable and eternal, the remoteness of our art-perceptions is apt to be momentary, and in part at least a matter of our own choice. While memory gently but insistently urges us into something much like the æsthetic attitude toward the treasures it offers us, real life, with its lions, and its fog, makes a more complex appeal. There is only one way to take memory, but there are two ways of taking life, the æsthetic and the practical. Between these two there is a plenteous lack of understanding. "What right," says the practical man, "have you to stand around just looking at lions and fog, when there is so much that is really important to be done about them?" He views everything in one of two aspects: it is either a thing that he can do something to, or it is a thing that can do something to him. He thinks of things, not as they are, but with reference to what he would like to do with them or to them. Perception for its own sake, expression for its own sake,

makes no appeal to him. Even memory he forces into practical service, and allows its other powers to atrophy.

At the other extreme is the æsthete, who lives to taste the flavors of his perceptions and to express them. "Lions and fog are so wonderful," he cries, "Look at them! Only look!" And while the practical man calls him a dreamer and a trifler and a shirk, he calls the practical man a barbarian and a prude, who is afraid to look at life as it really is. He undergoes experience as all men must, but almost in the moment of its occurrence it becomes something apart from him, delicately valued in the withdrawal of the æsthetic mood. Thus life for him is continually undergoing such a transmutation as for most of us only the magic of memory can bring about. While he is yet white with indignation, he may say to himself, "This is anger." While he loves, he realizes, "This is indeed passion." Probably the two moods, of emotion and appreciation, are not really simultaneous, they may alternate with lightning-like interplay. But they seem to the observer, and even, perhaps, to the possessor, like two streams

flowing on together, like two runners racing abreast, one oblivious of all but the mad motion, the other with eyes, not on the goal, not blind with the rush of it, but turned, deeply observant, on the face of his companion.

It is, then, this capacity for immediate aloofness from experience, this power of withdrawal into a realm closely resembling that of memory, which makes possible for the artist some of the things that shock us. But though it may to some extent explain his state of mind, it does not perhaps make us approve of it any more heartily. For there is something repellent to us in the ability thus to distance experience, either one's own or another's. It seems not quite warmly human. When memory, through its distancing power, gradually and gently loosens the bonds of reserve, we permit it, we even love it, because it is a universal experience. But when the æsthetic mood loosens these bonds, not gradually but at once, by merely, as it were, taking a step to one side, we shrink a little. An old man, we feel, may say things of his youth that his youth could not have said of itself even if it had known them.

What we probably do not realize is that people differ enormously in their rate of reaction to life. An experience which in one person may after its occurrence not come to full fruition in consciousness for months or years, may in another pass through the same phases in a few hours or even minutes. Yet the lower rate is so much commoner that there is a presumption against the immediate coining of experience into artistic expression. If, after a great bereavement, a man sits down at once and embodies it in a poem, if, when an overwhelming passion has barely burned itself out, he proceeds to set it forth in a novel, we find ourselves suspecting, even before we examine the case, that either the bereavement and the passion will prove to have been not so overwhelming after all, or else that their artistic rendering will prove not really artistic.

This last point is one which needs some attention. So far I have been considering the use of experience chiefly in its ethical aspects. It is clear that the use of other people as material for art often exposes writers to sharp and persistent criticism. I have suggested



that there are reasons grounded in the processes of the artistic temperament, why this criticism is often not in the least understood by the writers themselves. But, aside from this question of the moral right of an artist to make use of another's life, there is a second question, namely, what is the effect of the immediate use of experience on the art-product itself? Morals aside, does it tend to produce good art? In the case of one's own life, for instance, where it may be argued that one has the moral right to use whatever one likes, it might be of interest to inquire whether, purely from the effect on the art-product, it is not often a mistake to hurry forward into expression. The continual tasting and labeling of sensation tends to make sensation itself a little thin, or at least not quite true. And it is conceivable that lions and fog can never be completely grasped, even æsthetically, save by one who has first, in complete abandonment to practical needs, fought the lions and groped through the fog. Experience, entered upon with a conscious æsthetic purpose, may be thus deprived of its last, keenest quality, and even when not thus taken, it

may, if too hastily garnered into expression, never reach, even as pure expression, the mellowness of maturity that might otherwise have been attained.

The pressure upon the artist urging him to serve green fruit instead of waiting for it to ripen, has, of course, never been so great as now. But there is, I believe, pressure of another sort, far stronger and far more respectable, arising naturally and inevitably out of our present habits of thought. With the enormous growth of scientific interest — interest in facts, and faith in what they may lead us to — we have developed a reverence for accuracy, patience, thoroughness, and discrimination. "Study your own thumb-nail enough," Agassiz used to say, "and you will find enough to occupy you for a lifetime." And he was fond of testing young students by giving them a cross-section of a broom-handle and seeing what they made of it. This was excellent. Applied to coral islands and earth-worms and infusoria and sea-urchins, it is producing stupendous results. And now attention is being turned inward upon the human spirit itself — not, indeed, for the first

time, but for the first time with just these methods. Man himself, as Walter Bagehot pointed out a generation ago, has become an antiquity — that is, a subject for scientific investigation. And the artist as well as the scientist has caught the habit of thumb-nail study and inspection of broom-handle sections. This too is excellent. It is compelling writers to an honesty of aim, a meticulous precision in technique, of a kind that has never been equaled. The scientist who would sit in his study and write about the processes of nature “out of his head” is now in disrepute. Similarly, the journalist who would write about the poor without first having “done the slums” would be very much behind the times. We may swing back again to a love for the fantastic and fanciful, but at present we are lost in admiration of the obviously truthful.

These things go by waves. For there is always a tendency, when we have become impressed with the excellence of some quality, to see that quality everywhere, to the exclusion of all others. If we love blue, we see blue in everything. If we have been deeply moved by

the excellence of courage, or of honesty, or of kindness, we translate all the moral virtues into terms of sincerity or honesty or kindness. There are reasons, in the underlying unity of the world, why this can rather easily be done, both with colors and with moral qualities, but it has to be done carefully.

So with theories of art. Sometimes it is attempted to state all the æsthetic virtues in terms of morality. Ruskin did this very appealingly but not quite satisfyingly. Often they have been stated in terms of beauty, and this also has its pitfalls. Just now, in the flush of our enthusiasm for the ideals which science seems to have set up, we are stating them in terms of sincerity. This disposes of certain problems, for instance, the problem of ugliness; but it leads to other difficulties. For even in the scientific observation of fact there is such a thing as losing the significance of detail through absorption in its immediate aspects, and this is yet more easily possible in the realm of art. There may have been a time when artists needed to be called sharply to account for the sincerity of their intention and the accuracy of their work, but at present they



are much more apt to offer us these in place of something else that would be of still greater value. We are all of us in danger of falling into two fallacies: first, of assuming that accuracy of detail in the art-product is the most necessary condition of its high quality as art, and second — granting that such accuracy is very desirable — the fallacy of assuming that it will necessarily be attained in the highest degree through sincere study and immediately faithful rendering of detail. If our theory makes these two assumptions, it becomes very difficult to explain why a monument of honest and masterly self-analysis like Amiel's "Journal" is not, as a work of art, greater than "Hamlet." The truth of art has never, perhaps, been successfully defined; but we must see, when we really face the question, that it is something different from sincerity in the artist or accuracy in his product. For we have to cover the truth of Shakespeare with half his detail wrong, the truth of Conrad, with all his detail right, the truth of Euripides, with whose detail we have now simply nothing to do, the truth of Rodin, who never works from a single pose but expresses an un-



derstanding born of fused impressions. It must be clear that this truth can never be expressed, either objectively in terms of accuracy, or subjectively in terms of sincerity, except by wrenching these terms away from all their usual connotations. It must rather be conceived as a kind of vision that requires, indeed, an atmosphere of sincerity and is fed by experience — any experience, it hardly matters what, — but which requires also a certain remoteness and detachment of spirit.

I sometimes wonder whether we should not be gainers if our writers, like the Greeks, did a life-work first — a good chunk of hard, practically serviceable living — as farmers or manufacturers or administrators or teachers, and only after this were permitted to fall upon their task as artists. De Morgan and Conrad among the moderns are shining examples of the possibilities of this programme; and with them we might class the literary men who have most of their lives swung a definite business, carrying on their artistic labors, as it were, “with their left hand” — Matthew Arnold and Lamb, for example. It is, indeed, only rather recently that writing has become

lucrative enough to permit of its being chosen early as a profession.

Probably we should lose something. Doubtless we should gain something. Doubtless we should be spared much of the hasty mongering of experience to which I have been referring. In thinking of this, one is tempted to use the neat phrase of that prince of dreamers who was also in his lighter moments the prince of teases: "You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal."

THE END



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